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ABSTRACT

In this monograph, certain viewpoints, strategies, and policy tips have been separated from the main text. These "notebooks" of information, taken together, comprise a useful handbook for school officials who want to recognize censorship, put it in perspective, and prepare for consequent controversy. The purpose is to provide workable strategies for transforming a potentially explosive censorship attack into a healthy discourse about the mission of public schools. The first of six sections furnishes an overview by discussing the nature and scope of the problem, censorship targets, a definition of censorship, a legal view, forms of censorship, and the effects of censorship. Section 2 discusses the challenges to policymaking that censorship groups pose to school officials. The mission of public education is discussed within the context of appropriate curricular materials in section 3. Section 4 centers on textbook censorship and getting better textbooks. Section 5 provides specific policies and strategies designed to assist school officials to defuse censorship controversies and the divisive conflicts they engender among school publics. Appendices in section 6 provide 60 common targets (topics, content) of censorship: a sample textbook review (by The Mel Gablers, Educational Research Analysts); a sample letter for parents that reflects a censorship attempt (by the Maryland Coalition of Concerned Parents on Privacy Rights in Public Schools); phrases and terms likely to ignite censorship activities by extremist groups (by The International Reading Association); curriculum guidelines for choosing materials that mirror common beliefs and values (by the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force); and sample policies and guidelines regarding the selection of materials. Section 7 contains a list of resources (26 organizations and 13 publications). (JAM)

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CENSORSHIP: MANAGING THE CONTROVERSY

June 1989

"The selection of books for use in the classroom and library will never be entirely free of controversy, but school officials could go far towards defusing the issue by establishing clear criteria for their actions. The essential value in book selection should be respect for intellectual freedom. Not every book is appropriate for reading at every age, just as not every movie is appropriate for viewing at every age. Whenever questions arise, school officials should be prepared to explain and defend their guidelines as well as the particular decisions that are made."

Diane Ravitch, in a 1982 lecture before the Education Writers Association

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FOREWORD

Controversy is something educators must live with. In fact, the effective management of controversy may be one of the most basic responsibilities of elected officials in a democracy. As school board members, you are called upon constantly to address the questions underlying the challenge of censorship. These questions concern the very mission of public schools:

- What should students learn?
- How should they be taught?
- What learning materials should be used?
- How should curriculum decisions be made?

Rather than defending one position or another in this monograph, NSBA has gathered a wide variety of VIEWPOINTS from the vast spectrum of contemporary opinion that makes censorship challenges facing public schools today. Without endorsing any particular viewpoint, sometimes it is helpful to look at them less subjectively than usual and reassess the process by which your school district handles censorship challenges.

When the waters are calm, take the opportunity to reconsider policies and procedures for handling material that is challenged. Schools that implement effective policies have a better chance of resolving conflicts with fewer restrictions on the instructional and library materials available to students.

It is NSBA's hope that the information and viewpoints provided in this monograph will challenge local school districts to review curriculum policies and implement those policies which best serve the needs of their community.

Very truly yours,

James R. Oglesby
President

Thomas A. Shannon
Executive Director

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Consider this book as a series of clues to solving a puzzle.

Overviews will be painted, situations will be sketched, controversial and philosophical questions will be drawn, but few answers will appear. There's a simple reason for that: There are no simple answers.

For example: What is censorship? Take a minute now to put your definition on paper. Then turn to page 7 and see if your definition—or rather, your approach to the issue—remains the same.

Try another. What is the mission of public schooling? Is there a clear consensus on what our students should—and should not—be learning and exposed to in schools? See how the gray areas can blur what many people would argue is, and should be, a black-and-white proposition. Then consider how watered-down textbooks and curricula produce a climate conducive to critics.

If you haven't already, you will inevitably meet these people at your school board meeting. They will approach your teachers and administrators. They will challenge your school system. The tendency is to label them as this or that group, with this or that perspective, promoting this or that agenda. But the boxes are not always so neatly tied.

In some cases, the censor appears within. Could you recognize the censor? Have you ever been the censor? In what ways, if any, could censorship be justified? Who wins and who loses?

Perhaps the most useful role this book can play is to encourage school officials to untie these boxes of controversy, to look inside, to discuss with each other and their communities the pieces of the puzzle they find, and then to work together to determine what picture the pieces should complete.

In this book, certain viewpoints, strategies, and policy tips have been separated from the main text. These "notebooks" of information, taken together, comprise a useful handbook for school officials who want to discuss and assess their ability to recognize censorship, to put it in perspective, and to prepare for and effectively handle the controversy that accompanies a censorship drive.

This book is an attempt to help school board members navigate the rough seas of controversy—and not just sail around it. It is an attempt to define the issues surrounding school censorship and to put them into perspective; to introduce the parties involved and their concerns, rights, and responsibilities; and to provide a handbook of workable strategies for transforming a potentially explosive censorship attack into a healthy discourse over the mission of public schools.

Early in 1988, the National School Boards Association held a forum for school leaders on Censorship and the Public Schools. Comments from many of the speakers are included in this book. Other comments were made in interviews conducted specifically for this book. Excerpts and quotes are attributed to primary or secondary sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

FOREWORD

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Section One: AN OVERVIEW

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM 1
Viewpoint
Three Reasons for Troubled Waters 2

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM 3
Viewpoint
Challenges and Results 4

TARGETS OF CENSORSHIP 5
Strategy Notebook
Defending the Use of Student Journals 6

DEFINING CENSORSHIP 7
Viewpoints
Censors or Balancers? 9
Censorship or Selection? 9
Policy Notebook
Censorship or Guided Decision Making? 10

A LEGAL VIEW 11
Viewpoint
A Summary of Court Rulings 13

FORMS OF CENSORSHIP 14

EFFECTS OF CENSORSHIP 16

Section Two: THE CHALLENGERS

WHO'S COMPLAINING? 20
Viewpoints
Uncompromising Positions 23
Recommendations from the Right:
Eric Buehrer: Citizens for Excellence in Education 24
Michael Farris: Home School Legal Defense Fund 25
Mel and Norma Gabler: Educational Research Analysts 26
Phyllis Schlafly: The Eagle Forum 26
Strategy Notebook
Managing Controversy 28

RALLYING CRIES 29

Section Three: THE MISSION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

WHAT IS PUBLIC EDUCATION? 34

WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS? 36
Viewpoints
Common Beliefs and Values 38

Beyond a Literal Understanding 38
Saying 'No' to Sex Education 38

CURRICULUM: WHAT IT IS, WHO DECIDES 40
Viewpoints
The 'Essentials of Education' 42
The School Board's 'Three B's' 42
Policy Notebooks
Avoiding a One-View Rule 43
Free Inquiry and Criticism 44

RELIGION AND THE CURRICULUM 45
Viewpoints
Americans on Religion in the Classroom 46
Education vs. Indoctrination 46
Religion vs. Values 47
Policy Notebooks
Religious Holidays 47
Guidelines for Curriculum and Debate 48
Controlling Access to Facilities 49
Strategy Notebook
Putting Religion into the Curriculum 50

Section Four: TEXTBOOKS

HOW TEXTBOOK CENSORSHIP STRIKES AND WHY 52

WHY TEXTBOOKS ARE THE WAY THEY ARE 54
Viewpoint
Textbook Pressures 56

GETTING BETTER TEXTBOOKS 57
Policy Notebook
Toward a Better Textbook 58
Strategy Notebooks
Spotting Biases 59
Evaluating Textbooks 60
Writing Rationales 61

Section Five: TOWARD A SOLUTION

MEETING THE CHALLENGE 63
Policy Notebooks
Applying Lessons Learned 65
Checklist for Preparedness 66
Get Complaints in Writing 67
Strategy Notebook
Literature Classes for Parents 68

Section Six: APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Jenkinson's common targets of censorship 70

APPENDIX B
Sample textbook review, the Gablers 72

APPENDIX C
Sample letter for parents, endorsed by Schlafly 74

APPENDIX D
International Reading Association's terms likely to ignite censorship activities 75

APPENDIX E
Curriculum guidelines for common beliefs and values 76

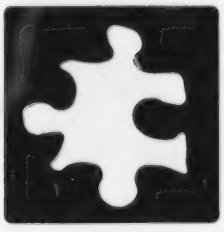
APPENDIX F
Sample policies and guidelines developed by the Academic Freedom Group and National Council of Teachers of English 78

Section Seven: RESOURCES

Where To Go for Help 88

"Controversy is something educators must live with; schools have always been society's battlegrounds. What is needed is not an end to conflict, but clearer goals, firmer convictions, and stronger defenses."

June Edwards, *Virginia English Bulletin*, Spring 1986



Section One: AN OVERVIEW

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

> ***"The most frustrating thing about censors is that you don't know for sure when they're going to attack, or why. One teacher will do a mini-course on "The Literature of Protest from Aristophanes to Jerry Rubin" without getting so much as a phone call from a curious parent, while another will be slapped down for putting* The Grapes of Wrath *on an outside reading list."***
>
> **Charles Suhor, *Dealing With Censorship*, 1979**

At first glance, the debate over censorship in public education seems simple enough.

On one side are those people who believe in restricting what is said, taught, read, written, and viewed in public schools. Their goal is to protect the nation's youth from exposure to "questionable" materials, whether library books that contain sexually explicit passages, or textbooks that contain words, ideas, or subject matter that are seen to conflict with the challengers' deeply held beliefs.

On the other side are those who believe censorship is a "dirty word" and should be stamped out, in any form, to ensure a free and enlightened society.

But those caught in the middle—most often school board members, who must ultimately decide educational policy—know that the issue of censorship is not simply a matter of right and wrong.

Underlying the challenge of censorship are fundamental questions concerning the mission of public education:

- What should students learn?
- How should they be taught?
- What learning materials should be used?
- How should curriculum decisions be made?

"There are many, many things we think it important for our students to learn, especially in the areas of character education, values, and development," Mary Ann Lecos, assistant superintendent for curriculum in the Fairfax County, Va., school district, said at the NSBA forum on censorship.

Because these areas are affected by family values, "there often is not a consensus about their being taught in school," Lecos says. "Very often we are urged to teach them in school and when we try to, we are attacked by people who tell us that's not our mission; that our mission is strictly academic."

"On the one hand you are asked to do more," said another forum speaker, the Rev. Charles Bergstrom, a representative of People For the American Way, a liberal-interest group that is anti-censorship. "(You are asked) to do a better job teaching basic skills, to expand teaching and critical thinking, to teach more math and science, and to keep young people from getting pregnant and using drugs.

"But, on the other hand," he adds, "there is this chorus, a long, strong series of voices, that wants you to do less; they want to restrict the ideas and methods and materials used to teach. The demands are that schools should do a better job of teaching values for the young. But, simultaneously, there is an increased attack on courses designed to install the crucial values of personal responsibility."

The censorship debate touches on many topics. Among the challenges frequently made are that social studies textbooks and courses omit historical references to religion; that biology instruction fails to give "balanced treatment" to "evolution science" and "creation science"; that health curricula belittle "traditional" family roles and encourage personal decision making in a vacuum of moral absolutes; that reading books ignore women, ethnic minorities, the elderly, and the handicapped—or present them as stereotypes; and that a particular series of learning materials, taken as a whole, promulgates "faith in man" as opposed to "faith in God," the former of which is a simplified definition of the "religion" of "secular humanism."

And yet the debate does not always center on books or other curricular materials. Also called into question are school-based health clinics that dispense birth control information or devices; Halloween parties; student newspaper articles about matters such as teen-age mothers or children of divorce; and student speeches.

"Few aspects of school life, from the most trivial to the most essential, are free from scrutiny in today's climate of intolerance," states a report by People For the American Way. "This intolerance has a 'chilling effect' on a wide range of activities."[1]

Yet Eric Buehrer, executive vice president of Citizens for Excellence in Education, an arm of the conservative National Association of Christian Educators, says it is "ridiculous" to characterize as chilling the complaints parents have over the use of certain books or programs.

The 1986-87 report of People For the American Way, he noted in an interview, "shows a 20 percent increase in 'censorship' incidences over the last year. What that really means is a 20 percent increase in 'customer' dissatisfaction. If a business issued a report showing such an increase, it would pour its

energy into finding out what went wrong, how it missed the mark, and what it had to do to win the customers back. In public education, instead of the customer always being right, the customer (parent) is too often viewed as generally wrong—an annoyance."

In its role as leader, the school board must decide on curriculum, taking into account the views of many "customers" and sound educational objectives, which is not an easy task. As noted in a study on censorship commissioned by the American Association of University Professors: "Deciding what students shall read and learn in a pluralistic society cannot be free of controversy. Nor should it be."[2]

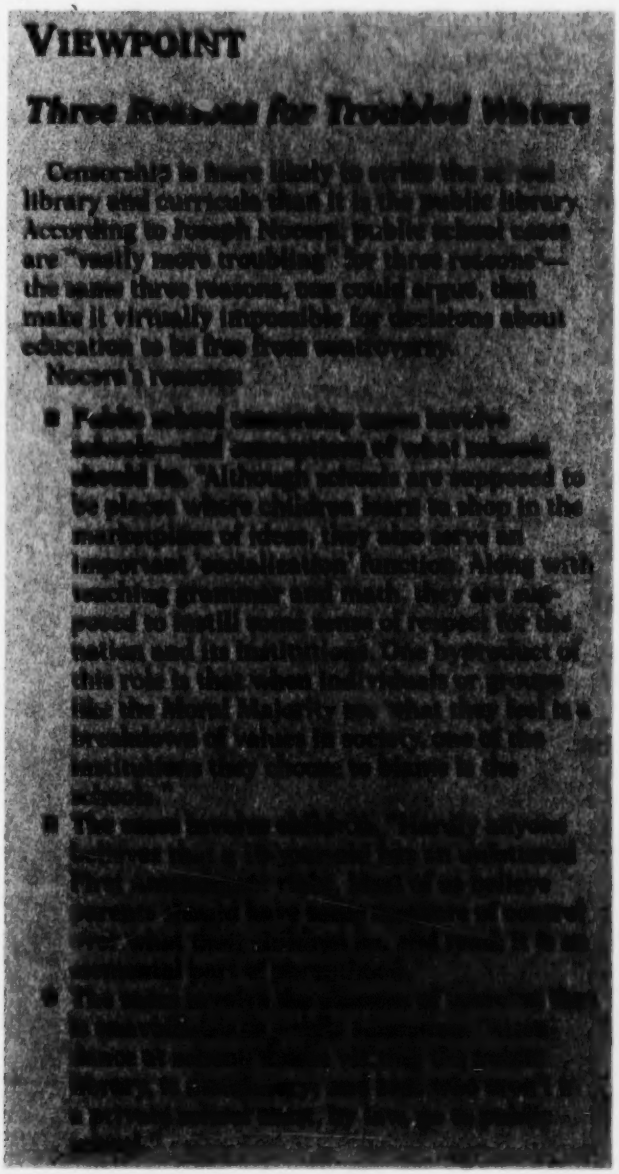
Many educators see concern, protest, and criticism as essential checks and balances that ensure that public schools remain responsible and responsive to the public trust. "In our pluralistic society, choosing what students shall read and learn can never be an easy process. Nor can it be free of controversy. In that difficult process, challenges to instructional and library materials in our public schools have a legitimate function," notes a 1981 report on censorship. "As a check both on unavoidable human error and on the occasionally arbitrary exercise of authority, such challenges may be viewed as an essential element in the overall selection process."[3]

For school boards, then, the challenge is not to avoid controversy, but to meet it head on with adequate policies and procedures that provide an open forum for deciding what should—and should not—take place in public schools. Failure to do so could create calamity in the classroom and a controversy that plays itself out in the courtroom or in the news media, and a situation where the winners could become losers in a community fraught with dissension and distrust.

"Opposition," notes the 1981 report, "is one of the most healthy things that can occur—provided it's in an environment of participation, not domination."[4]

"Challenges to teaching materials are by no means confined to the Bible Belt, or to any one region of the country. In fact, the incidence of censorship may well be greater in those regions—the metropolitan areas of the Northeast and West Coast—that seem least vulnerable, if only because school curricula and library materials in those communities are more varied and potentially more controversial."

***Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, 1986**



VIEWPOINT

Three Reasons for Troubled Waters

Censorship is more likely to arise that are our library and curricula than it is the public library. According to Joseph Moore, public school cases are "really more troubling" for three reasons—the same three reasons, one could argue, that make it virtually impossible for decisions about education to be free from controversy.

Moore's findings

- Public school censorship cases involve attempts by members of what I would call the "Attentive" public to shape what children are exposed to. Although schools are supposed to be places where children learn to stay in the marketplace of ideas they also serve an important socializing function. Along with teaching students how to think, they are supposed to instill some sense of respect for the nation and its institutions. Because of this role it is often difficult for people, like the Moral Majority, who want to limit the presentation of ideas in the schools to distinguish between what they choose to censor in the schools and what they choose to censor in the schools.
- The [illegible]
- The [illegible]

Scope of the Problem

What is censorship to some is merely "customer dissatisfaction" to others.

Regardless of how it is viewed, opposition affects a broad range of activities in the public schools.

Consider, for example, this sampling of challenges that school officials confronted in the 1987-88 school year:[6]

> ***Item:*** In Crown King, Ariz., the "666 Reading Club," so named by a teacher because she wanted her students to read 666 pages each month, was changed to the "667 Reading Club." Objectors had complained that the former number was a sign of Satan. Local residents signed a petition calling for the ouster of two school board members for letting "religion interfere with their duties as school trustees." Eventually all three board members resigned, but first they voted not to renew the teacher's contract because they found her "philosophy of education" incompatible with that of the board of trustees.
>
> ***Item:*** In West Fork, Ark., school officials banned the monthly meetings of the Teens for Christ Club after the American Civil Liberties Union threatened legal action. The club, one of the most popular at the school, had met during school hours for years and included prayer.
>
> ***Item:*** A group of parents in the Colorado counties of Jefferson, Adams, and Denver advocated rating books much the same way the Motion Picture Association rates films. Under the system, parental permission would be required before students could obtain books rated PG, R, or X. The founder of the group said she wanted to see the system established nationwide.
>
> ***Item:*** In Panama City, Fla., the school board created a policy that, in effect, banned more than 60 books that were said to contain vulgar, obscene, and sexually explicit material. Included were works by Shakespeare, Hemingway, Faulkner, Dickens, Orwell, and Steinbeck. Under the policy, instructional aides had to be approved by the superintendent, who was quoted as saying his responsibility was to "restore Christian values" to the schools. The policy was later reversed, but two books—Robert Cormier's *I am the cheese* and Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*—remained banned. The incident, initiated by a parent, led students to file a First Amendment lawsuit. As of October 1988, the case was on appeal.
>
> ***Item:*** In Rockford, Ill., a group of parents, teachers, and students objected to Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* because it contains the word "nigger." The book was kept on the 11th-grade English class reading list but was no longer required.

In all, 157 censorship incidents were reported in the sixth annual report of People For the American Way, a liberal-interest group that surveys censorship incidents nationwide.

As noted by the organization, the survey is not comprehensive; it is "based on news reports from around the country and on independent research, including interviews with those involved." The incidents fall into two categories: "attempts to remove or restrict books, materials, activites, or curricula in public schools" and "other potential threats to public education."[7]

According to People For the American Way, challenges were reported in 42 states and in every region of the country; in one-third of the incidents, books or programs were removed or restricted. The most frequently challenged books were John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye;* the most frequently challenged authors were Steinbeck and Judy Blume (seven each), Stephen King (four), and Salinger and Robert Cormier (three each). Forty-seven challenges were reported in the South, 46 in the Midwest, 40 in the West, and 19 in the Northeast.[8]

For a more comprehensive listing of censorship incidents, one would have to conduct original research. Judith F. Krug, director of the Office of Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, said in an interview that no group she knows of attempts to determine annually the exact number of censorship incidents nationwide.

Even if there were such an effort, it would fall short.

In his book, *The Schoolbook Protest Movement,* Edward B. Jenkinson, a nationally recognized expert on school censorship, noted that "for every incident that is reported, some scholars estimate that 25 go unreported. As more and more data are gathered, other scholars estimate that the unreported-reported ratio is closer to 50 to one."[9]

Reasons for the gap? There are several. For one thing, many incidents don't evolve into full-scale controversies that attract media and community

attention. Many censorship challenges are solved informally. And, in some instances, censorship strikes from within and is not easily identified, as in when an educator decides not to assign a reading because it is personally offensive or because it *might* stir up controversy. As noted in a 1986 report on school censorship, "most incidents probably are not reported at all, and may not even be generally known within the communities where they arise."[10]

A comprehensive survey on public school censorship, conducted in 1980, found that the local media reported on only 15.2 percent of 513 challenges specified. The survey also found evidence in write-in comments that "certain controversial materials may not be selected for some schools at all, being eliminated or precensored in the selection process—not because they fail to meet established educational criteria but because they do not conform to the personal values of the individuals making the selection." Other comments indicated "that some precensorship results from the 'chilling effect' of previous controversy and the desire to avoid conflict."[11]

How frequent, though, is that conflict, and is it growing? For school year 1986-87, People For the American Way documented a 20 percent increase in censorship incidents over the previous school year. In all, the group reported a 168 percent increase in censorship attempts from 1982-83 to 1986-87.[12]

Again, however, those findings are based on a representative sampling of news reports throughout the country. Another report, presented in March 1986 by the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, found that "after a decrease between 1975 and 1979, attempts to remove, restrict, or alter public school library materials increased dramatically, reaching a peak in 1982. Since 1983, the numbers have remained roughly constant, although at a level higher than at any time since 1975."[13]

The report, which was presented to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations for the departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, also found that "as recently as a decade ago, almost no case law existed in the area of library censorship. Now there is a substantial and growing body of case law on public school library censorship attempts, reflecting a dramatic increase in litigation and, presumably, in this sort of activity."[14]

VIEWPOINT

Challenges and Results

How often, and in what ways, does censorship strike?

How do school officials respond?

Do they establish, follow, and publicize policies for the selection and review of curricular materials? Are the policies effective?

These and other questions were addressed in a comprehensive survey on public school censorship conducted in the spring of 1980.

According to a 1981 report that summarizes the survey findings, *Limiting What Students Shall Read*, previous surveys had dealt with "either the selection of school books and learning materials or the censorship pressures on them." The 1980 survey was "undertaken to provide comprehensive data on the relationship between the censorship problem and the larger selection process."[15]

The survey was sponsored by the Association of American Publishers, the American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. It stands as the most extensive national survey on school censorship to date.[16]

The reported findings were that:[17]

- **Challenges to classroom—and, more frequently, library—materials occur in schools in all regions and in all types of communities.**
- **Challenges arise from within as well as from without the educational establishment.**
- **The challenges often result in limiting students' access to materials, information, and ideas.**
- **Many schools lack—and fail to follow—written policies and procedures for selecting materials and for reconsidering materials that are challenged.**
- **Schools that have such written policies appear to resolve conflicts with fewer restrictions on the instructional and library materials available to students.**
- **Many schools fail to communicate their educational objectives and methods to the local community.**
- **The public relations efforts of many schools are more often crisis-oriented than ongoing.**
- **Local and national pressure groups, especially those politically right-of-center, increasingly attempt to exploit the controversial arena of school book selection.**

"The issue of censorship in our schools—its extent, the origin and nature of challenges to books and materials, the resolution of those challenges, their perceived impact on the educational environment, and their relationship to the overall process by which instructional and library materials are selected—is too important to be evaluated solely on the basis of scattered reports, occasional headlines about book-burning, celebrated cases of high-court litigation, or unsupported claims by contestants in the educational or political arena. At the heart of the issue lie the difficult questions of what and how students shall learn—questions crucial to all who vie for influence over the future direction of our pluralistic society."

***Limiting What Students Shall Read*, 1981**

TARGETS OF CENSORSHIP

Although an exact accounting of public school censorship is not available, surveys over the years and comments from those who study the issue point to the same conclusion: Censorship challenges and resolutions occur—and can be expected to occur—in any schoolhouse in any district at any time. And while there are ways to prepare for the censor, and to handle controversy when it arises, there is, as one observer noted, no such thing as "censorship insurance."

If there were, the policy would have to cover a broad range of activity, for no longer are the would-be censors content with challenging a single book because of "obscene language." The censorship debate calls into question a wide range of ideas, teaching methods, and books (whether textbooks that are required reading or library books that are not) that students are exposed to in public schools.

After examining "thousands of pages of criticism of schoolbooks, various teaching materials, and teaching methods" over a 12-year period, Edward B. Jenkinson of Indiana University concludes "that there are at least 200 targets of the protesters who belong to organizations."[18]

"The groups," he writes, "do not necessarily agree on all targets, but there is a common core of at least 50 that are shared by the New Right alone." In his book, he highlights 60 targets that he believes "are among the most common found in the literature of protesting groups from either the right or the left."[19] (For a complete listing, see Appendix A).

Among the most common targets are:

- Sex education.
- Drug education.
- Critical thinking skills.
- "Objectionable materials" that are believed to promote the tenets of secular humanism.
- Mention of evolution without an equal mention of creationism.
- Novels, stories, poems, or plays that portray conflicts between children and their parents or between children and persons in authority. Also, literary works in which children question the decisions or wisdom of their elders.
- Literary works that contain characters who do not speak standard English.
- Literary works and textbooks that portray women in nontraditional roles—anything other than housewife or mother. "On the other hand," Jenkinson notes, "some feminist groups object to illustrations in basal readers and other textbooks that show women in the so-called traditional roles."
- Invasions of privacy. "Any questions, theme assignments, or homework that asks students to examine their personal backgrounds—family, education, religion, childhood experiences, etc. In addition, any questionnaires or assignments that allegedly violate the privacy of the family."
- Histories that point out any weaknesses in the founders of this nation or in any of the nation's leaders.
- Negative thinking, such as "stories about alienation, statements from members of minority groups that indicate they feel people are prejudiced against them, stories that are frightening or horrifying, stories that are depressing."

These and other targets illustrate the depth and complexity of the school censorship debate. It is further complicated by the diversity of the challengers and the intense emotion that prompts them to action.

As noted in a 1986 report on public school censorship, religiously conservative groups do not have "a monopoly on threats to textbooks and library materials. Pressures have come also from minority groups (protesting, for example, a character in *Huckleberry Finn* as a racial stereotype) and from women's organizations. At the core of such pressures are deeply personal feelings and beliefs. The depth of those convictions varies little among fundamentalist parents in West Virginia or Tennessee, black parents in California or Illinois, or women's groups in Maryland and New York," the report continues. "In every such case there is a belief that schools should not teach

certain values, or should not expose their students to certain materials, or should not explore certain issues in the classroom."[20]

To effectively debate the merits of a censorship challenge, adequate policies must lay the groundwork for that discussion to ensure that it is open and democratic. But perhaps just as important is an understanding of the parties involved and their positions—and those positions depend greatly on how a person defines censorship.

STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Defending the Use of Student Journals

The student journal: an invasion of privacy or a sound educational exercise?

Ask Phyllis Schlafly, head of the Eagle Forum, and she'll tell you the student journal, a frequent target of censorship challenges, is a form of "child abuse in the classroom." In a book by that title, Schlafly includes a 25-point checklist parents can use to evaluate school materials, courses, and teaching methods.

Point 17 asks parents to determine whether a school forces a child "to write journals, diaries, or compositions which require the child to reveal private family information or to relive and remember unhappy events or feelings."[21]

The National Council of Teachers of English is aware of the controversy over student journals—also called logs, daybooks, thinkbooks, or diaries.

"Because journals provide students considerable freedom to express their thoughts and feelings, students often write about private and intimate subjects—subjects that more properly belong in personal diaries than school journals," reads an NCTE resource guide on student journals. "The problem for teachers is how to encourage students to write personally and frankly about ideas and issues they care about without at the same time invading their private lives."[22]

The NCTE material offers guidelines to help teachers use journals positively and efficiently. Among them are that teachers should count, but not grade, journal entries because they are "a place where students can experiment and try out ideas without being corrected or criticized for doing so"; and that the journals "are neither diaries nor class notebooks, but borrow features from each: like diaries, journals are written in the first person about issues the writer cares about; like class notebooks, journals are concerned with the content of a particular course."

But why use journals? The NCTE material offers the following in explanation:

- They help students find personal connections to the class material they are studying.
- They provide a place for students to think about, learn, and understand course material.
- They provide a place to collect observations, responses, and data.
- They allow students to practice their writing before handing it in to be graded.

"Teachers in all subject areas, from history and literature to psychology and biology, have found that students who write about course readings, lectures, discussions, and research materials better understand what they know, what they don't know, and what they want to know—and how all this relates to them," reads the NCTE resource guide ". . . In short, journals are active, methodical records of student thought and opinion during a given term, and are meant to help students prepare for class discussions, study for examinations, understand reading assignments, and write critical papers."

DEFINING CENSORSHIP

What is censorship?

- To author and poet Granville Hicks, "a censor is a man who knows more than he thinks you ought to."
- To the American Library Association, it's "the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons—individuals, groups, or officials—find objectionable or dangerous."
- To textbook evaluators Norma and Mel Gabler of Texas, the label "censor" does not adequately define what they do, despite their enormous successes in influencing textbook selection in Texas and throughout the nation. They see their role as "balancers," whose mission is to show "textbook content to the public and urge that students be given more balanced and accurate information," especially in controversial areas.
- To Michael Farris, executive director of the Home School Legal Defense Fund and former head of the Washington state chapter of the Moral Majority, it is a word that serves a particular group's interests. "When the liberals want to censor books they object to, they call it academic freedom," he says. "When the Christians want to censor books they object to, it's called censorship."[23]
- And to Eric Buehrer, executive vice president of Citizens for Excellence in Education, an arm of the National Association of Christian Educators, a censor—one who "may say that a particular book would not be allowed for anyone in society"—should not be confused with a "selector"—one who "may say that the book should not be allowed for children in a captive environment."

These and other viewpoints highlight the difficulty of both defining and dealing with censorship, what NSBA past president Jonathan Howe calls "a red-flag or red-cape word if there ever was one." Censorship, he said at the NSBA forum, "is really something that is in the eye of the beholder."

Is it censorship or responsible decision making, he asks, when school board members exercise their "important and prudent responsibility, as policymakers" to "review what we're doing in our schools?"

For example, Howe adds, "is it censorship to adopt a particular type of curriculum that espouses a particular theory when it comes to history? Would it be censorship to change and to alter and to try to more clearly reflect what we think is a proper portrayal of women and minorities in our history? . . . or is that something that is reponsible on our part as trying to advance some other thoughts that are out there?"

An argument frequently raised during the censorship debate is that the challengers themselves are not censors, but those in authority—the "selectors," the "editors," the "curriculum writers"—are. According to this argument, virtually any decision made by school board members concerning what is taught, used, and learned in school can be viewed as the act of a censor: "A person empowered to suppress publications or excise any matter in them thought to be immoral, seditious, or otherwise undesirable."[24]

"Based upon that definition," asks Buehrer, "what school board member is free from acting as a censor? In fact, every school board member, whether white or black, Jew, Protestant, Buddhist, or atheist, is guilty of censoring."

Many support that assessment.

"Who attempts to censor materials in the schools? Note how that question is phrased. The word* attempts *is significant since only a person in authority can actually censor materials. But anyone can bring sufficient pressure to bear on a person in authority so that books will be censored."

Edward B. Jenkinson, *Dealing With Censorship*, 1979

"Some censors may charge educators with censorship under the guise of selection, and some educators have themselves argued that censorship is inevitable because no course can include all available material and it is therefore necessary to select what will be included," notes John Martin Rich, professor of cultural foundations education at the University of Texas at Austin.[25]

But there is a fine line between censorship and control; between suppression and selection.

"Without adequate safeguards," Rich says, "selection could become a form of censorship. Selection is the process of choosing materials for a course or a curriculum that will help fulfill objectives and be appropriate to learners. Censorship can further be distinguished from selection by the censor's refusal to use the excluded material and the imposition of punishment if the learner disobeys."[26]

Edward B. Jenkinson, an education professor at Indiana University and a senior fellow with Phi Delta Kappa, who has written extensively on censorship, clarifies that distinction.

"Selection is an attempt to find the best that suits educational objectives, certain specific things that people want to teach," Jenkinson said in an interview. "And then the teachers, the librarians and so on should go out and try to find the best representative materials, a variety of materials representing various points of view."

"Selection," he adds, "should not begin with the presumption that we're looking for something wrong. Censorship does. Censorship seeks to get rid of things. And those people like Norma and Mel Gabler, who protest they are not censors, are curiously enough the writers of sets of materials in which they tell people how to get rid of things. They maintain—and I've debated them five times, so I know the scenario—that only the people in power have the right to censor. So I suggested to them that we coin a new term for them and call them 'censor agitators.'"

To prevent selection from turning into censorship, Howe says, school board members should exercise sound judgment in the "very important policy-making activity of trying to balance the respective interests of our constituencies and the publics that we serve: the public of the student, the public of the teacher, the public of the parent, and the public of those who are out there and who may not have any connection whatsoever with the school."

By recognizing the rights and interests of those concerned with what students learn in school, the school board can work to prevent a situation where "vocal control" becomes "local control" due to the built-in tension between freedom and authority. To do that, however, another distinction has to be drawn: that between "censor" and "protester."

"As soon as one acknowledges that it is impossible for all works of literature to be taught during high school (not to mention during a lifetime), the issue of censorship must be faced, for, regardless of the reasons, some works of literature will not be taught and some will not even be available to students. Censorship is an ethical issue in a most basic sense, inasmuch as both materials taught and materials omitted may have an effect on an adolescent's moral as well as cognitive development."

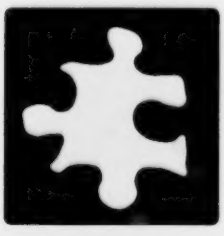
Robert C. Hanna, *Virginia English Bulletin*, 1986

"Most educators would agree that good literature is moral, but our moral and the censors' moral will only occasionally overlap. By moral, we mean that writers of books strive accurately and honestly to reflect the reality of human experience, and that assumes that writers have the freedom to poke into the dark corners of our thoughts and actions. Only the freedom to enter dark and forbidding areas will lead to the shock of recognition that lets us know how far short we are of what we could become. Because we fear that shock, writers may use satire or irony, and that is almost certain to offend censors."

Ken Donelson, *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1987

"I believe that parents have the right to protest; I think they have the right to be concerned," Jenkinson says. "Where I draw the line is this: I think that, as a parent, my rights extend solely to my children, and not to all of the children in the school or the community or the nation. So if I want an alternate assignment, I have a right to request that."

But, he adds, "I also have the right, as a parent, to protest a book and stand up and say, 'I don't think this should be in the schools to begin with.' But if I'm going to do that, it seems to me that it's absolutely incumbent upon the school system to have in operation a full set of procedures for handling my complaints, and that set of procedures should make it impossible for one person, including the principal, to remove a book in a library. Nobody should be able to do that. It should go through a process. And if it goes through the review committee and the review committee says, 'This is a bad choice,' and they make that recommendation to the school board, and the school board says, 'Let's pull the book,' I'm not going to complain about that. Because it has gone through a process, and at the local level the school board ultimately makes the decision."



VIEWPOINT

Censors or Balancers?

In their textbook challenges, Mel and Norma Gabler of Longview, Texas, claim they are not "censors," but "balancers," whose job is "to reveal textbook content to the public." Only those in authority to select and review curricula and materials can censor, they say, and often the guiding principle of these "censors" is "indoctrination," not "education." A recent press release clarifies their position.

They write:

- "The values held by the vast majority of Americans according to recent surveys are not reflected in textbooks."
- "Yes, textbooks have been censored—censored of the kind of solid, reliable information which would permit you to receive pro and con evidence about important issues, especially those which are controversial."
- "Textbook omissions are their most serious fault, but how can you know what vital information has been censored? You receive evidence for only one side. This is indoctrination, not education. Your viewpoint is predetermined to a large extent by the value systems in textbooks. Students should be exposed to objective information enabling them to determine their own value system by choice, not indoctrination."
- "Textbooks are seldom blatant, thus few students realize their values are being changed gradually—just like dripping water wears away stone."

"Our efforts," the Gablers write, "have been almost entirely in showing textbook content to the public and urging that students be given more balanced and accurate information. When we do this, the small minority of Americans who hold the same values taught in textbooks attack us and label us 'censors.' "

VIEWPOINT

Censorship or Selection?

Are the words "selection" and "censorship" synonymous? Those who challenge what is read, viewed, heard, taught, and learned in public schools often argue that they are. But Lester Asheim, in the 1953 *Wilson Library Bulletin*, makes some distinctions.

He writes:[27]

- "Selection begins with a presumption in favor of liberty of thought; censorship with a presumption in favor of thought control."
- "Selection's approach to the book is positive, seeking its values in the book as a book, and in the book as a whole. Censorship's approach is negative, seeking for vulnerable characteristics wherever they can be found anywhere within the book, or even outside it."
- "Selection seeks to protect the right of the reader to read; censorship seeks to protect not the right—but the reader himself from the fancied effects of reading."
- "The selector has faith in the intelligence of the reader; the censor has faith only in his own."

"In other words," Asheim concludes, "selection is democratic while censorship is authoritarian, and in our democracy we have traditionally tended to put our trust in the selector rather than in the censor."

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Censorship or Guided Decision Making?

In making daily decisions about the materials and methods of instruction they use, the National Council of Teachers of English says its members must choose "from increasingly broad and varied alternatives in order to serve students who are themselves increasingly diverse, both linguistically and culturally."

The NCTE advocates and supports guidelines to help teachers make those decisions. Yet those very guidelines may be attacked as being a form of censorship.

The NCTE agrees that "censorship and guidelines sometimes appear similar because both involve selection from myriad alternatives. However, censorship and professional guidelines may be distinguished one from the other."

"The goal of censorship," the NCTE notes, "is to remove, eliminate, or bar particular materials and methods. The goal of professional guidelines is to provide criteria for selection of materials and methods."

To illustrate, the NCTE notes that an educator acting as censor would exclude specific materials or methods, as in eliminating books with unhappy endings. In contrast, the educator acting under professional guidelines would work to *include* specific materials or methods, as in selecting some books with unhappy endings to give a varied view of life.

The NCTE offers further examples:

EXAMPLES OF CENSORSHIP	EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES
1. **Are Essentially Negative.** *Example:* Review your classroom library and eliminate books that portray stereotypes.	1. **Are Essentially Affirmative.** *Example:* Review your classroom library. If necessary, add books that portray groups in nonstereotypical ways.
2. **Intend to Control.** *Example:* Do not accept *policeman.* Insist that students say and write *police officer.*	2. **Intend to Advise.** *Example:* Encourage such nonlimiting alternatives for *policeman* as *police officer, officer of the law,* or *law enforcer.*
3. **Seek to Indoctrinate, to Limit Access to Ideas and Information.** *Example:* Drug abuse is a menace to students. Eliminate all books that portray drug abuse.	3. **Seek to Educate, to Increase Access to Ideas and Information.** *Example:* Include at appropriate grade levels books that will help students understand the personal and social consequences of drug abuse.
4. **Look at Parts of a Work in Isolation.** *Example:* Remove this book. The language includes profanity.	4. **See the Relationship of Parts to Each Other and to a Work as a Whole.** *Example:* Determine whether the profanity is integral to portrayal of character and development of theme in the book.

Source: National Council of Teachers of English, "Statement of Censorship and Professional Guidelines," NCTE Board of Directors, 1982.

21

A Legal View

When Island Trees, N.Y., school board members in 1976 removed books they characterized as "anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy" from secondary school libraries, they did so despite a review committee's recommendation that the books be retained.

The action paved the way for a landmark Supreme Court ruling on school censorship.

At issue was the extent to which school board members could apply their personal moral, social, and political values in making decisions regarding the selection and removal of curricular and library materials.

"Prior to *Island Trees*, the nation's public schools had been exposed to a number of seriously divergent rulings from the federal courts as a result of the burgeoning number of actions stemming from library book removal," notes George Lipp in NSBA's publication *First Amendment and the Schools*. "But until *Island Trees*, the Supreme Court itself had seldom addressed the issue of school district powers and prerogatives regarding instructional material selection and removal and curriculum formation, and had never done so within a First Amendment framework."[28]

And so the Supreme Court's ruling in *Island Trees Union Free High School v. Pico* was eagerly awaited.

When it was delivered on June 25, 1982, many people were disappointed. Eight separate opinions were written and not one commanded a majority. As Justice Marshall noted, "It may be pretty difficult for the lower courts, or anyone else, to figure out exactly what (the decision) stands for."[29]

In effect, the 5-4 decision ordering a new trial raised more questions than it answered. Justice Brennan, who wrote the plurality opinion, stressed that it was narrow in scope, involving only library books. He indicated that "educational suitability" and pervasive vulgarity would be permissible grounds for removing library books. But he also found it important that the school board ignored the advice of its review committee to reinstate the books; he noted that had school officials " 'employed established, regular, and facially unbiased procedures for the review of controversial materials,' matters would have been different." Since the evidence did not rule out the possibility that the school board's decision to remove the books "rested decisively on the board's disagreement with the ideas expressed in the books," a new trial was ordered.[30]

Since *Island Trees*, the focus of litigation has shifted from the school library to the classroom. On Jan. 13, 1988, the Supreme Court handed down another significant First Amendment ruling in the area of school censorship. In a 5-3 ruling in *Kuhlmeier v. Hazelwood School District*, the court upheld a high school principal's decision to remove from the school newspaper two articles, one on teen pregnancy and one on the effect of divorce on students. The court held that since the newspaper was sponsored by the school, in the context of a journalism course, school officials had a right to remove the materials.

At the NSBA forum, Robert Reynolds, the principal of Hazelwood East High School, defended his actions. He said he had objected to the article on teenage pregnancy because, even though anonymity was granted, it would not be difficult to determine the identities of the three teenagers showcased. He had objected to the article on divorce because of certain comments made by students who were identified. "One was a ninth-grade girl," he said, "14 years old, who was quoted as saying that she thought she was the reason for her parents' divorce, but later found out it was because her dad wasn't spending enough time at home with her and her mom . . . Another girl was quoted as saying that her father was an alcoholic and was drunk all the time and that was why her mother divorced him. And then a third student identified said that her father didn't make enough money and that was the reason for the divorce.

"I've been an administrator in Hazlewood in that particular attendance area for 20 years and I knew these families and I did know that they were divorced," Reynolds continued. "I didn't know the reason why, and I didn't feel it was my business. I also didn't feel that private information should be circulated throughout the community in the high school newspaper."

According to Gwendolyn H. Gregory, NSBA deputy general counsel, it is too soon to tell how far-reaching the *Hazelwood* decision will be. With the diversity of opinion in the *Island Trees* case, school attorneys were left without clear guidelines as to the role of school officials in determining what students shall be exposed to in their schools. With *Hazelwood*, school officials received some guidance; they were told that their actions should be based on "sound pedagogical reasons."

"The problem is that what is a sound pedagogical reason to one person is not a sound pedagogical reason to another," Gregory says. "Where does philosophy end and pedagogy begin?"

About all the Supreme Court has definitively said in the area of school censorship is that it believes in

"As a public high school student in the 1970s, I received quite an education . . . I learned that responding to the hypocrisy of censorship in a free society is not an easy or comfortable task. Teachers, students, and neighbors who fervently had discussed freedom throughout my youth chose to remain silent about the removal of the books. The only recourse to be found was in public debate through the media and in the courts."

Steven Pico, *Protecting the Freedom to Learn*, 1983

local control of public school systems, that the court is reluctant to act as a "super censor," and that the school board has broad—but not limitless—discretion in the management of school affairs.

The key is: What are those limits?

"On the issue of school censorship, there is as yet no definitive judicial opinion, and many critical issues remain unresolved," writes Henry Reichman in the 1988 publication, *Censorship and Selection.*[31]

"Nevertheless," he adds, "three conclusions seem to be substantiated by the diverse judicial record." Among them are that the "personal beliefs of individuals—political, social, moral, or religious—may not be used to justify the removal of school resources" and that "resources may legally be removed for reasons of space, obsolescence, lack of educational suitability, and—here the waters are somewhat murky—perhaps owing to 'pervasive vulgarity.' The courts, however, do seem to distinguish between the school library and the classroom in determining the limits of school board discretion."[32]

The third conclusion Reichman notes is that "school board policies and procedures must be followed in all reviews of library and instructional materials. The failure of school boards and their administrative agents to follow constitutionally valid policies and procedures—that is, to abide by due process protections—will, according to the U.S. Supreme Court, be grounds for invalidating decisions to remove or restrict access to library and instructional materials."[33]

But not everyone agrees with Reichman's interpretations. Gregory agrees that "there are not a lot of certainties in the law," but finds it difficult to advocate all of the conclusions drawn by Reichman in his book.

"On the whole," she says, "the Supreme Court has been fairly lenient in trying to support the school board's decision, even though they may personally disagree with it. Given that power, the school boards are lucky to have it and should be careful in the way they exercise that power and not give lip service to the pedagogical reasons for doing things."

As it stands, Gregory adds, "it's not really clear what the limits are. But you can be sure that at some point in time, if school boards act arbitrarily, the court will put some limits on their authority."

Gregory suggests her own set of conclusions for school board members to consider when treading the murky waters of school censorship. She notes that:

- **The court is not the place to resolve controversies.** "The school board may win the case in court on legal grounds," she says, "but lose it in the court of public opinion."
- **Keep a distance.** "To the extent you can, divorce your own political, religious, and, to some extent, your social and moral beliefs from the decision making. Be careful that you're not imposing your beliefs on the students." However, she adds, "the courts have said that one of the duties of the school is to 'inculcate'—which is a very strong word—moral values. So it's not easy. You're kind of walking a tightrope."
- **Rule of thumb:** "What is educationally sound is legally sound."
- **Don't do things to avoid lawsuits.** "You can't avoid lawsuits," Gregory says, "but you can avoid losing them. To do so you have to be fair to people and do what you believe is educationally right." School board members, she says, should "read the book before they take it out" and base their decisions on as much original fact gathering as possible. "Listen to people's complaints, follow up, don't accept as truth the conclusions of others, understand where they are coming from, and investigate."

"The overall theme," Gregory says, "is that you gave everybody their day in 'court'—an opportunity to provide some input; that you were involved in a rational decision-making process; and that there is a pedagogical basis to your decisions. . . In most of the cases in which the school board has lost, it was because it had a knee-jerk reaction."

VIEWPOINT

A Summary of Court Rulings

School censorship cases usually fall under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which says:

> "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Gwendolyn H. Gregory, NSBA deputy general counsel, offers court interpretations of some cases involving the First Amendment:

- **Student expression:** In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), the court overturned a school board rule against students wearing black armbands in school as a form of protest against the Vietnam War. The court ruled that students "do not shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."
- **Religion:** In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971), the court provided a three-pronged test for determining whether a particular state action "establishes religion": The act must have a secular purpose; its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and it must not foster an excessive entanglement of the school with religion.
- **Right to read:** In *Zykan v. Warsaw*, 631 F.2d 1300 (7th Cir. 1980), the court ruled that school officials did not violate the students' rights to know and to read by eliminating certain courses and removing certain books from class reading lists. The court found that, in general, school boards have "considerable authority to regulate the specifics of the classroom" at the secondary level.
- **Textbooks and library books:** In *Island Trees Union Free High School v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982), a majority of the court stated a belief—but not a holding—that school districts have nearly unrestricted authority under the First Amendment to make decisions about textbooks and other curricular materials. With regard to library books, four justices said the board's discretion is not unfettered and cannot result in suppressing certain viewpoints.
- **Student speech:** In *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser*, 106 S.Ct. 3159 (1986), the court upheld the suspension of a student who delivered a campaign speech that was replete with sexual innuendos at a school assembly. The court said "the constitutional rights of students in public schools are not coextensive with the rights of adults in other settings." The court also found that "the undoubted freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views in schools and classrooms must be balanced against the society's countervailing interest in teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior."
- **"Unofficial" publications:** In *Thompson v. Waynesboro Area School District*, 673 F.Supp. 1379 (M.D.Pa. 1987), the court ruled that school officials can set limits on when, where, and how materials that are not sponsored by the school are distributed. In *Burch v. Barker* 861 F.20 1149 (9th Cir. 1988) the court held that a school district requirement that all material to be distributed be cleared in advance was overly broad and infringed First Amendment rights of students.
- **Secular humanism:** In *Smith v. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County*, 827 F.2d 684 (11th Cir. 1987), the court held that the mere omission of historical facts about religion does not "discriminate" against religion. It also ruled that just because books are "offensive" to one's religious beliefs does not mean they violate the establishment clause. The plaintiffs had alleged that the lack of "equal time" for religion in the curriculum in effect established the "religion" of "secular humanism." The plaintiffs declined to seek Supreme Court review.
- **Opting out:** In *Mozert v. Hawkins County Board of Education*, 827 F.2d 1058 (6th Cir. 1987), the court ruled that *exposing* students to ideas that conflict with their religious beliefs is not the same as requiring them to *perform* an act that violates their religious beliefs. The opinion also noted that parents can, under Tennessee law, teach their children at home if they object to school teachings. The trial court had ordered the school board to allow a particular group of students to opt out of a reading course after their parents argued that the textbook series being used showed a systematic bias against their faith. The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to hear the case.

- **Student press:** In *Kuhlmeier v. Hazelwood School District*, 108 S.Ct. 562 (1988), the court ruled that school officials did not violate student free speech rights by removing "objectionable" material from the school-sponsored newspaper. The decision applies to "expressive activities" that students, parents, and other members of the community might reasonably perceive to bear the "imprimatur of the school"—and thus fairly characterize as part of the school curriculum.
- **Textbooks:** In *Virgil v. School Board of Columbia County, Fla.*, 677 F. Supp. 1547 (M.D. Fla. 1988), the court ruled that "*Kuhlmeier* resolves any doubts as to the appropriate standard to be applied whenever a curriculum decision is subject to First Amendment review." The court agreed that "the board's decision reflects its own restrictive views of the appropriate values to which . . . students should be exposed" but "such content-based decision making regarding curriculum is permissible."

  The case was brought by a minister and his wife who complained about two selections in their high school daughter's humanities textbook: translations of Aristophane's *Lysistrata* and Chaucer's narrative poem, "The Miller's Tale." The selections were not required reading but were read aloud in class.

  Pursuant to school board policy, an advisory committee reviewed the book and recommended that it remain in the curriculum, but that the two selections not be required reading. The superintendent disagreed and recommended that either the two selections be removed from the book or that it not be used in class. The board voted with the superintendent.

  The court found that "sexuality and vulgarity" were present in the works and that the board's removal of the book was "reasonably related to the pedagogical goal of keeping vulgarity and certain matters of sexuality out of its curriculum." While saying there were less restrictive ways of handling the issue—such as warning students of the sensitive nature of the material—the court nevertheless concluded the alternative chosen by the court was not unreasonable.

  The plaintiff students had argued that the board improperly attempted to deny the students access to views that differed from the board's fundamentalist religious orthodoxy. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court decision, 862 F.2d 1517 (11 Cir. 1989).

Forms of Censorship

Censorship takes various forms, and not all of them are apparent.

When parents throw library books onto a bonfire, it is clear that censorship is raging out of control.

When educators avoid using a critically acclaimed book because of its perceived potential to incite controversy in the community, a not-so-obvious censoring has taken place. And when school board members make decisions about curriculum content and materials without adequate knowledge and input—whether due to inadequate policies or a failure to solicit expert opinion—that, too, is a form of censorship.

Such activities result in books that are banned, curricula that is devoid of meaning and context, and books that have been "dumbed-down," or made bland or trivial, glossing over topics that would otherwise be controversial.

What results is a science book that replaces the word "evolution" with "nitro selection of organisms"; a classroom discussion on pilgrims and Thanksgiving that fails to mention religious persecution; and an assigned work of fiction, such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* that is "corrected" of colloquial language.

Covert censorship takes many forms. As noted by People For the American Way, censorship challenges "have led teachers to teach 'defensively' to avoid disruption to their work. This often means skirting controversial issues and quietly removing books from the classroom when a single parent complains. It encourages self-censorship in curricular and reading choices that result in the selection of materials that are 'safe' but not necessarily in the best interest of the student. Self-censorship occurs as well in the development of textbooks and instructional materials, as controversy is ruthlessly pruned from, for example, history and civic textbooks."[34]

There has been "some watering down," acknowledged Thomas E. Anderson Jr. at the NSBA forum. Anderson is deputy commissioner for finance and compliance with the Texas Education Agency, whose elaborate statewide textbook selection process and major purchasing power has influenced what is published for school districts nationwide. "We have a tendency not to deal with some of the hard issues, facts, and theories in science. We haven't dealt with religion as a social movement, as an institution with its impact on history. That is the result of this whole (selection) process . . . and the publishers trying to get a book that's saleable, that wouldn't get the hoards and throngs of individuals up in front of the state board of education testifying against the book."

"One of my favorite examples of gutless educators who aid the censor, possibly without understanding that they are doing so, comes from a 1974 letter in the* School Library Journal. *A Massachusetts school librarian, joining in the debate over the worth of* The Upstairs Room, *by Johanna Reiss, pointed out the even less suitable* How to Eat Fried Worms, *by Thomas Rockwell. She objected to the word* bastard *and had replaced it with* bum *in the school's copies. Her letter concluded, 'Censorship is tricky territory, but it could be prevented by responsible editorship.' I'd like to think that she had no idea of the implications behind that sentence—but then perhaps she did."

Kenneth L. Donelson, *Phi Delta Kappan*, November 1987

Likewise, some educators shy away from classroom discussion and materials that dispute their personal views or are seen as potentially creating dissension in the community. What results is self-censorship, which has also been called "passive censorship" and "closet censorship."

"We know that some teachers and librarians shy away from controversy, just as we know that they would deny that they are censors," writes Kenneth L. Donelson in the November 1987 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*. "If a librarian or a teacher has a particularly unpleasant run-in with a censor, it sometimes hardly matters who wins the battle. The nagging fear of another encounter may make that librarian or teacher gun-shy. When the next controversial book comes up for purchase, it should not be surprising if the person takes the easy way out and avoids potential controversy. If one of us were to quiz that person, he or she might honestly be unsure whether not choosing a particular book was censorship or selection."[35]

Evidence of this censorship from within was revealed in a 1981 report, *Limiting What Students Shall Read*. The report summarizes the results of an extensive 1980 nationwide survey sponsored by the American Library Association and others.

The report notes several write-in comments made by survey respondents:[36]

- One superintendent was quoted as saying: "With all the good literature available, it would be my hope we could accentuate the best and leave a lot of the questionable stuff off the shelves and the reading lists."
- Another administrator responded: "In my opinion, the Association of American Publishers is allowing too much offensive material to be presented to the schools. Keep the material clean and morally high in quality. Free sex, stories on homosexuals, situation ethics, and other such garbage should not be placed in schools. Throw the junk in the wastebasket. Bad literature and bad television are powerful aids in tearing down the American ideals."
- As for precensorship based on a fear of controversy, one respondent noted that: "Parental badgering has caused rifts between teachers and administrators. Extreme care is taken in selecting any material. Teachers are afraid of bringing in 'controversial' subjects."
- Said one superintendent, who noted there were no recent challenges in his community: "We really try not to select controversial materials going in."

"Such comments provide evidence that the difficult-to-document phenomenon of precensorship does occur in our schools, although it may be impossible to assess its full extent," the report notes.[37]

It further highlights one "startling" finding, in which "librarians named school personnel (teachers, administrators, and librarians) as initiating over 30 percent of the challenges cited—whereas administrators who reported on classroom as well as library challenges cited school personnel as initiating fewer than 10 percent of the recent challenges."[38]

Censorship from within, in its most subtle forms, is not always apparent—but it can affect classroom learning just as dramatically as a public book burning.

"My main observation is that teachers, librarians, media personnel, and supervisors practice self-censorship—'let's do it for them before they do it to us,' seems to be the prevailing attitude. Most of the time, the people doing the censoring do it out of fear (and) misinformation, and they usually are very professional otherwise."

Louisiana librarian, *Censorship in the South: A Report of Four States*, 1980-1985

EFFECTS OF CENSORSHIP

When the censors prevail, access is denied. Challenged textbooks are removed, controversial teaching methods are halted, and library books found to be objectionable are put on restricted use.

When the censors fail, access is maintained. The textbooks remain, the teaching methods are continued, and the library books are free to all.

These results are visible, easy to document, and easy to assess. In some instances, for example, the removal or restricted use of materials might be justified on the grounds that the board, following sound policies and procedures, was being responsive to the public trust. As noted in a 1981 report, censorship challenges sometimes act "as a check both on unavoidable human error and on the occasionally arbitrary exercise of authority."[39]

But censorship battles that heat up over strongly held beliefs of right and wrong, that create adversaries of those parties that must work together, that are fueled by the absence of—or noncompliance with—adequate policies and procedures, can yield consequences that are not so visible:

- A community divided by dissension becomes polarized. Public confidence in public schools is eroded, as is support for teachers' salaries, school budgets, and bond referendums.
- Teachers and administrators lose stature in the community, making it difficult to attract and retain the best in the field.
- Educators, beleaguered and demoralized by attacks to their professional integrity, opt to "play it safe" by avoiding materials and topics that might be construed as controversial.
- Publishers, reacting to the marketplace, maintain a posture that "saleable" books are those that are "safe." Provided are "watered-down" textbooks that avoid or gloss over controversial subject matter and "special editions" of well-known works of literature that have been "cleaned up."
- Censors, buoyed by victory, plan attacks and create "censorship fallout," a situation in which a book successfully banned in one community becomes fair game in all others.
- School board and city or county elections become a target for people of like mind who believe their collective voice has not been heard. That "unheard voice," even if it reflects a slim minority of the population, could launch a successful mission to drown out all other voices.
- School officials abdicate local control when a third party—in most cases, a judge—is asked to settle a censorship dispute. A protracted court battle drains financial resources.

Even when such a battle is won, the victory "may be a two-edged sword," states *Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, a 1986 report commissioned by the American Association of University Professors.[40]

The report, by the Commission on Academic Freedom and Pre-College Education, continues: "The challenge is turned aside but the controversy so divides the school and the community that a form of self-censorship settles upon school officials, who find it less troublesome to trim educational judgments. The evidence for this self-censorship is elusive, if only because few would acknowledge, after successfully resisting pressures from a parent or a local community group, that curricular decisions are affected by noneducational considerations. But the enormous costs of litigation alone are sufficient reason to give pause to school officials, particularly after money is spent in a protracted defense of freedom."[41]

"The first strike against censorship is that it is impractical; censoring or banning a book will not keep young people from reading it. On the contrary, censoring is a good way to draw attention to a questionable passage and encourage people to seek out an unabridged version."

Karla S. Henthorn, *Virginia English Bulletin*, Spring 1986

The effects of censorship vary from situation to situation, depending on the outcome and the perspective from which one is judging—student, parent, educator, school official, or society as a whole.

Students are affected when educators, reacting to recent or expected challenges, maintain a defensive posture, selecting curricular and reading choices that are "safe"—as opposed to those that would best achieve educational objectives.

When one segment of the community successfully challenges a book because some portion of it is deemed offensive, students from all segments of the community are affected. Students obviously cannot learn from that which has been removed or restricted. But in cases when materials are restricted or removed as a knee-jerk reaction to pressure from a vocal minority, the lesson is very clear.

"What is the lesson that school boards teach the children in their care every time they proudly ban a

book?" asks author Kurt Vonnegut Jr., whose novel *Slaughterhouse Five* is frequently challenged. " 'This is a great country where responsible adults must suppress books they don't approve of. Watch and learn.' Some lesson."

"Moreover," it says in *Liberty and Learning*, "removing a book from the school library because a passage in it offends members of the community increases in some measure the probability that the student will see suppression as an acceptable way of responding to controversial ideas. Destruction of the book heightens it still further. Suppression thus invites cynicism among students that they should be free to learn."[42]

In some cases, students are allowed to opt out of courses of study that conflict with their religious beliefs or family values. Likewise, they are allowed to use alternative textbooks or reading assignments on the same grounds. Many parents and educators find this an acceptable compromise between the two institutions most responsible for the education of a child—the home and the school. Some people, however, argue that opt-out procedures divide children along religious lines, as opposed to teaching students to tolerate different points of view. Those in favor of opt-out procedures counter that families should not be forced to submit their children to teachings that clash with those taught in the home. How this compromise is—or isn't—worked out can likewise affect how students view controversy and debate.

Another potential lesson learned by students is deception, as in when a work of fiction is altered to protect a high school reading class from being exposed to "objectionable" language or "controversial" ideas.

In a coda to *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury notes how he "discovered that, over the years, some cubbyhole editors at Ballantine Books, fearful of contaminating the young, had, bit by bit, censored some 75 separate sections" from his novel. "Students, reading the novel which, after all, deals with censorship and book-burning in the future, wrote to tell me of this exquisite irony."[43]

In these and other incidents, as when the language in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is "altered or deleted to satisfy perceived sensibilities of members of the community," the students end up reading what "is in fact false: portions of the work have been created by someone other than the author, yet the entire work is depicted as an essentially true rendering of the author's own words," notes *Liberty and Learning*. ". . . Where literature is concerned, we can think of no reason why the classroom and school library should ever be other than what they seem, places where a work of fiction is as it appears to be.

". . . people should think twice before deciding to censor a book because, in doing so, they deny the chief problem adolescents face. The problem: high school students live in an imperfect world. In censoring a piece of literature, adults can ignore the problems it presents rather than helping and teaching students to solve problems."

Karla S. Henthorn, *Virginia English Bulletin*, Spring 1986

There is no reason why teachers and librarians should be induced to deceive their students, or why students should be misled as to the actual nature or content of what they are reading."[44]

And, finally, censorship efforts under the guise of protecting youth could actually do them a disservice. In censoring a piece of literature because of the problems it presents, educators are actually censoring an ideal opportunity for helping adolescents come to grips with those problems. So argues Karla S. Henthorn, who, as a student at the College of William and Mary, wrote about the influences of censorship on her reading in high school.

Instead of censoring Hamlet's tragic flaws, Henthorn says, teachers should continue to do what they have always done: assign students to write essays discussing those flaws. "By completing such assignments," she says, "students learn to read critically. They learn to question and analyze rather than blindly accept what they read. If students learn to read in this way, there is no book in the realm of adolescent literature which should be of any danger to them."[45]

Educators are also affected by censorship battles—lost or won. Relationships with parents and others within the school system are strained; professional judgment is questioned. Both can lead to a devastating erosion in morale.

"If teachers and librarians cannot exercise their professional judgment as to what is educationally sound, within the legitimate constraints imposed by the schools, then the way is open for outside pressure groups to determine the limits of unobjectionable discourse in the schools," it is noted in *Liberty and Learning*.[46]

In some extreme cases, the report notes, hate and violence erupt, causing even victory to be bittersweet, as in the case of a life sciences teacher in Michigan whose methods of instruction and textbook came under attack. In a court opinion in favor of the teacher, the judge noted that the teacher "and his family suffered the harassment of crank phone calls and refuse left on their porch, which continued up

through the time of the trial three years after the events . . . while some may accept his vindication in court, there may still be many doors closed to him in the future which otherwise would have been open."[47]

The community at large also suffers when intolerance marks censorship disputes. Dissension and division undercut the public school's role to bring together diverse elements of the society. A parent with a legitimate concern might be afraid to approach the school for fear of being labeled a troublemaker or worse. And democracy, on which the whole business is based, suffers a blow.

"Public schools, to me, are creatures of democracy with the tradition, obviously, of local control and parental involvement," the Rev. Charles Bergstrom of People For the American Way said at the NSBA forum. "So (school system) procedures and (parental) involvement become more and more important when one strong voice tries to drown out all others on the basis of intolerance. We need to recognize some of the factors involved in a vast majority of the incidents and objections are ideological and provoke controversy and are emotional and disruptive."

If not kept in check with adequate policies, procedures, and open forums for debate—all of which need to require a tolerance for different points of view—these objections could, in the words of Bergstrom, "rule out broader concerns about the education or merit of the materials that are going to be used in public schools."

Section One: AN OVERVIEW

NOTES

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5. Joseph Nocera, "The Big Book-Banning Brawl," *The New Republic* (Sept. 13, 1982), pp. 22-23.
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7. *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn, 1987-88 Report*, p. 11.
8. Ibid., pp. 1, 57, 61, 63.
9. Edward B. Jenkinson, *The Schoolbook Protest Movement* (Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1986), p. 16.
10. *Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, p. 1.
11. *Limiting What Students Shall Read*, pp. 6, 14.
12. *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn, 1986-1987 Report*, p. 3.
13. Henry Reichman, *Censorship and Selection, Issues and Answers for Schools*, a joint publication of the American Association of School Administrators and American Library Association (1988), p. 8.
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16. According to the report, a 52-item questionnaire was mailed to a randomly selected stratified sample of 7,500 public school media personnel, principals, and district superintendents; there were 1,891 responses. Telephone and mail-in surveys were also conducted with officials in charge of statewide textbook evaluation and adoption procedures in 22 states.
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31. *Censorship and Selection*, p. 72.
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33. Ibid.
34. *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn, 1986-87 Report*, p. 3.
35. Ken Donelson, "Six Statements/Questions From the Censors," *Phi Delta Kappan* (November 1987), p. 212.
36. *Limiting What Students Shall Read*, pp. 14-15.
37. Ibid.
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39. *Limiting What Students Shall Read*, p. 26.
40. *Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, p. 8.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p. 9.
43. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 177.
44. *Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, pp. 10-11.
45. Karla S. Henthorn, "Censorship: The ****** Solution," *Virginia English Bulletin: Censorship or Selection?* (Virginia Association of Teachers of English, Spring 1986), p. 29.
46. *Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, p. 9.
47. Ibid., p. 8.

Section Two: THE CHALLENGERS

WHO'S COMPLAINING?

- "All over the country there has been an uproar because our students . . . can hardly read, write, add, or make a living. Instead, they are taught how 'the Communists are persecuted in our country,' about family planning, acid rain, the horrors of nuclear war, that businessmen are evil, and everything that is negative about America. No wonder so many of them are depressed and get in trouble!"—Alan C. Thomaier, school board member, Nashua, N.C.[1]
- "Teacher training, textbooks, and programs have moved from the primary position of imparting knowledge and skills to the place of changing attitudes and values."—Donna Muldrew, former educator, Lubbock, Texas.
- "Parental rights to instill in our children the sacred values that we hold dear must be respected by the school system and protected under the law."—Delores Brown, mother.
- "In one class . . . we had a panel of kids to decide which unborn child should receive a special drug designed to raise the IQ level of a retarded child based on race, social status, and need. The teacher asked my opinion . . . and I questioned his ethics in using this assignment."—Vandola Stevens, student.
- "Young children are being taught there are no moral absolutes, no fixed rules of life; they're being dispatched into the world to find their own way. This fact confronts us in every report we hear on juvenile behavior. Rising sexual promiscuity, vandalism, drug abuse, thefts, assaults, drunken driving, and suicides all point to problems in the schools."—Mel and Norma Gabler, textbook critics, Longview, Texas.[2]

School board member, teacher, parent, student, and nationally recognized textbook critics: Theirs are among the voices of citizens questioning what children are being exposed to and taught in public schools.

In their comments, one can see the threads of logic woven by the so-called New Right, a conservative coalition that supports and mobilizes activists at the community level.

Among the conservatives are the Eagle Forum, headed by Phyllis Schlafly; Concerned Women for America, headed by Beverly LaHaye; Educational Research Analysts, run by Norma and Mel Gabler; the National Legal Foundation, headed by Pat Robertson; and Citizens for Excellence in Education, an arm of the National Association of Christian Educators.

These and other groups share the beliefs that schools are increasingly anti-parent, anti-government, and anti-Christian; that schools promote "secular humanism," a religion founded in man, not God; that schools offer a daily dosage of negative thinking—subjects and teachings that depress and worry students and that undermine the nation; that schools overstep their responsibilities in offering sex and drug education; and that schools constantly invade students' privacy, asking them to explore and share their feelings about a wide range of issues.

In today's complex world, it is convenient to lump censorship challengers, and their concerns, together. It is convenient to refer to them collectively as the "New Right," the "Far Right," or the "Religious Right." It is convenient to do so because many—if not most—of the reported censorship incidents can be traced to the literature and beliefs of one conservative group or another.

But censorship challenges also come from the liberal end of the religious-political spectrum. John Martin Rich draws the distinction between the two camps.[3]

The purposes of conservative censorship, he says, are to "promote virtue and prevent vice" and "to combat forms of immorality considered harmful to society." Liberal censorship, he adds, "refers to the actions of minority groups (whether a numerical or a power minority) to censor materials that they believe contain prejudicial stereotypes or that place their group in a degrading position."

Liberal censors include the civil libertarian who seeks to ban the most popular club on campus because it includes prayer; the parent who wants to ban Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* because it is "anti-Semitic"; the teacher who complains because a colleague has put the Star of David on a holiday bulletin board; the feminist who wants to "redo" a popular short story using neutral pronouns and showing women in nontraditional roles; the black community leader who wants to cross out the word "nigger" from all school copies of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn;* and the publisher who bows to these demands.

Author Ray Bradbury has a few words for such censors.

In a coda to *Fahrenheit 451,* Bradbury notes that editors had wanted to delete the words "God-Light"

and "in the Presence" from his story, "The Fog Horn," in a high school reader.[4] He notes that a university theater declined to put on his play, *Leviathan 99*, which is based on the Moby Dick mythology, because it had no women in it "and the ERA ladies on campus would descend with ballbats if the drama department even tried!"[5]

And he notes that a "solemn young Vassar lady" wrote to say she enjoyed reading *The Martian Chronicles*, but wondered whether it "wouldn't be a good idea, this late in time, to rewrite the book inserting more women's characters and roles?" Bradbury also says he received mail "complaining that the blacks in the book were Uncle Toms and why didn't I 'do them over?' "[6]

"The point is obvious," Bradbury wrote. "There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches. Every minority, be it Baptist/Unitarian, Irish/Italian/Octogenarian/Zen Buddhist, Zionist/Seventh-day Adventist, Women's Lib/Republican, Mattachine/Four-SquareGospel feels it has the will, the right, the duty to douse the kerosene, light the fuse. Every dimwit editor who sees himself as the source of all dreary blanc-mange plain porridge unleavened literature, licks his guillotine and eyes the neck of any author who dares to speak above a whisper or write above a nursery rhyme."[7]

Still, the New Right is the primary source for nearly all organized school and library censorship, say Barbara Parker and Stefanie Weiss in *Protecting the Freedom to Learn*. Conservative censors, the authors continue, have "what liberal censors will never have: national organizations with local affiliates, strong financial backing, the ability to orchestrate censorship activity through national newsletters, how-to-censor citizen guides, and powerful national leaders . . ."[8]

Schlafly, LaHaye, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, the Gablers, and others have achieved national stature and recognition in their crusades to purge public schools of teachings and practices they claim run counter to the moral upbringing parents want for their children.

Some challengers, however, are unaffiliated with any group. In many instances, they are motivated to act simply because of a book or tale their child brings home from school.

"The battle (against censorship) must go on," says Studs Terkel, who found himself in an industrial town to defend his book *Working* in a face-to-face confrontation with a group of parents and students who questioned the rightness of his book. "But who specifically are we battling?" Terkel asks. "It's this woman in a housedress, not sure of her words, self-conscious, defensive. This guy with the gnarled hands, inarticulate, indignant, terrified of something happening in the world."[9]

"Teachers, administrators, and boards should not be so professionally naive that they believe that all censorship efforts will ultimately fail . . . Censors of school materials prevail whenever they are able to convince a substantial number of citizens that school people cannot be trusted to make the proper decisions with regard to what children and youth should be learning."

B.G. Raines, *Virginia English Bulletin*, Spring 1986

Sometimes the would-be censors—whether blue-collar workers or high-paid professionals—clash with school officials in court. When they do, the media focus their attention, and the situation may be blown out of proportion. As a result, the actual concerns of the protesters may be buried under sensational headlines and lost in simplistic writing.

Consider *Mozert v. Hawkins County Public Schools*, the 1986 Tennessee textbook case in which U.S. District Court Judge Thomas G. Hull—who was later overturned—ruled in favor of the plaintiff parents and said their children could opt out of classes that used reading material the parents found offensive.

For a time, the children, whose parents were fundamentalist Christians, were allowed alternative reading assignments. But then the school board adopted a resolution requiring teachers to use only textbooks adopted by the board as regular classroom textbooks.

The case, says David A. Splitt in an article on school law for *The Executive Educator*, a monthly magazine published by the NSBA, was perfect for a "media blitz, a classic clash between Christianity and the state."[10] Gene Tarne, in an article published by *Human Events*, a conservative weekly, maintained that the media, "unable to see the forest for the trees," had "sensationalized individual objections raised by the parents, while ignoring the context of those objections."[11]

According to Tarne, the media focused on what "seemed eccentric at best"—that the parents were objecting to classic works of literature, such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*—oversimplified the case and missed the main focus of the parents' complaints. The parents, he says, submitted over 200 pages of excerpts from the student texts and teacher manuals to show "evidence of bias against their faith." In most cases, their objections were not to the bodies of works themselves, but to the context in which the works were presented and discussed.[12]

For example, he notes that the parents:[13]

- Objected to *The Wizard of Oz* because its use focused on magic and occult-like themes. "In one instance," Tarne says, "the teacher is advised to instruct the class: 'Although each of us would like to have a magic potion that would make us wise, or courageous, or loving, it is within ourselves that we must look for the source of these virtues.' The parents not unreasonably questioned an instruction that makes man alone the source of all virtues."
- Objected to the use of a passage from the *The Diary of Anne Frank*. The passage, Tarne says, quotes the central character as saying everyone should have "some religion. . . . It doesn't matter what. Just to believe in something." The passage, he adds, appears in a section called "Other Religions" in which "the vast majority of stories deal with North American Indian beliefs, nature worship, Buddhism, Chinese religion, African beliefs, and mythology."

  "In this context," Tarne asks, "does Anne's plea for any type of religious belief include nature worship as being as valid as any other faith?"
- Objected to what one attorney called "feminist intrusions." In the story "Maria Pepe," for example, the National Organization for Women is described as "a group concerned with the rights of women to receive equal pay for equal work and equal treatment by law." Predictably, Tarne adds, there is no mention that "NOW is a radical-feminist political activist group that promotes such controversial issues as comparable worth, abortion, and the 'rights' of homosexuals and lesbians."

These and other examples illustrate the passions that motivate people to question what their children are exposed to in public schools. As noted earlier, there are other sets of beliefs that also evolve into censorship challenges.

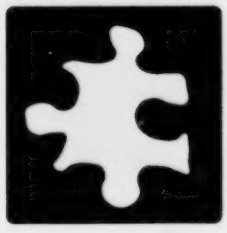
In any case, a better understanding of the censorship issues, be they liberal or conservative, can yield a more open discussion on the merits of a challenge. The intent is to temper the volatile mix of ignorance and fear that can cause concern to erupt into dangerous controversy. Such a development, says B.G. Raines, who, as a superintendent for Washington County, Va., went through a series of censorship challenges, can threaten a school system's effectiveness and cause those concerned "to believe that the easiest and best thing to do is to capitulate to the demands of the protesters."[14]

Raines notes further that "the intensity of feeling which parents demonstrate when they feel that their children are being led in the wrong direction should never be underestimated or misunderstood."

"We must remember," he says, "that these people firmly believe that they act for the protection of their children."[15]

"The issue here is not whether the perceptions of the Moral Majority types are dismaying; it's whether these people have a right to act on their beliefs. Do people who want to shield their children from works they believe are "immoral" or "unpatriotic" have a right to do so, or is their right inferior to the rights of parents who want the schools to expose their children to those books (in the belief, of course, that they will not harm their children)? Or must the desires of parents give way to other considerations—the expertise of teachers and librarians, or the generally acknowledged merit of the book in question, or some First Amendment consideration? These are the thorny questions at the heart of every school library controversy—and it is these questions, having as much to do with the role of schools and the rights of parents as with the First Amendment, that librarians, and the rest of us who endorse the Bill of Rights, must face."

Joseph Nocera, *The New Republic*, Sept. 13, 1982



33

VIEWPOINT

Uncompromising Positions

In the area of school censorship, people on both sides of the debate say there is room for compromise as well as crusade.

But when it comes to appeasing the concerns of fundamentalist and evangelical Christians who believe the public schools are promoting "secular humanism," just how much give and take is there?

According to Michael Farris, executive director of the Home School Legal Defense Fund, "there has been a fundamental shift among fundamental Christians. I think the vast majority of leaders within fundamentalist and evangelical circles now believe that public education is beyond repair. They're doing everything they can do to just get the kids out and to have their own systems—home schooling and Christian schools."

June Edwards, a faculty member of the English department at Marquette University, discusses the schism between public schools and the fundamentalists in an article published by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English.

"A major tenet of the New Right, and fundamentalism in general," she says, "is that only God is capable of solving human problems . . . For the New Right . . . the only way to solve problems is through faith and right belief. Conformity is essential."[16]

"In contrast," she adds, "humanists, who come in a variety of forms—agnostics, atheists, church-going believers, and clergy—agree that humans should strive to prevent and solve the complex problems of life on Earth and not sit by waiting for divine intervention. We are not puppets on a string but have infinite potential to reason and act . . . Why, asks the religious humanist, would God give us intelligent, creative minds, and forbid us to use them?"[17]

When those two very different tenets are applied to the classroom, two very different attitudes result. There are those who believe "parents and teachers must therefore keep tight control over what students read, say, and do," Edwards says, and that "teachers should not send students to the library to do independent research." On the other hand are those who "believe that the means of solving problems and understanding our world is through reason and the scientific method of research applied to all realms of life. No area should be closed to investigation . . . everything should be open to scrutiny and discussion, including the Bible, democracy, and the philosophy of humanism."[18]

There are other sharp distinctions between the "New Right" and "humanists." According to Edwards, humanists "believe that our culture has come to cherish certain values because of thousands of years of human experience and that these values should be passed on to our children through education and example. Moreover, those values are relative and hierarchical, depending on the particular circumstances. Killing a person is normally wrong, but shooting a terrorist massacring a crowd would be applauded . . . Stealing a loaf of bread to feed starving children or telling the Nazi SS no Jews are living upstairs would be morally right."[19]

To the fundamentalist, though, "life is polarity in all its aspects," Edwards says. "People are either good or bad, weak or strong, masculine or feminine, innocent or guilty, saved or unsaved, Christian (according to their terms) or un-Christian. Nothing can be in between. Just as one cannot be partially pregnant, one cannot be partially true. Every situation has only two aspects: the positive or the negative . . . all values are God-given and absolute and exist on the same level. Stealing is *always* wrong, even if one is freeing a slave from bondage."[20]

In an interview, Farris expounded on that polarity.

"Is there a Santa Claus?" he asks. "I don't care whether you think there's a Santa Claus or you don't think there's a Santa Claus. There either is a Santa Claus or there isn't a Santa Claus. He's either objectively real or he's not real. There's no such thing as Santa Claus being real for you. And the same thing is true about God and about values. Either God's real or God's not real. Either adultery's wrong or it's not wrong. That's how Christians, who take the Bible seriously, look at the world."

Edwards notes another distinction: The fundamentalists, she says, believe "the purpose of the present life is to prepare for the next" and to do that one must "worship properly, believe rightly, and live purely—all, of course, as defined by the New Right . . . In contrast, the purpose of life for humanists is to enjoy this life and help all people to do so."[21]

A third distinction, she adds, is that "even if their own children remain pure and clean, New

Right parents are in grave danger because their vengeful God judges the whole nation and not just individuals."[22]

"Thus," Edwards says, "getting corrupting books out of schools and libraries is a matter of dire consequence, not only for the religious right's children but for themselves."[23]

In her article, Edwards echoes the sentiments of Farris, who believes the public schools, from a fundamentalist point of view, are "beyond repair."

"Compromise," Edwards says, "is simply not possible. The two positions I have discussed cannot exist side by side in the same classroom or the same school, at least not in matters concerning curriculum, textbooks, and values. One view must predominate, which means the other has lost."[24]

Perhaps that is why Farris, who acknowledges that "school boards are given an unenviable task," nevertheless suggests: "If they want to continue to drive fundamental and evangelical Christians out of the public schools, they should keep doing what they're doing: They'll drive all of us out."

"The assumption that there is more than one right way is an assumption that has been identified as a secular humanist value. And that, to people like me, is a religion, because a religion is a philosophy that answers all the issues of life: That is, where did man come from? Is there a God? Is God relevant to daily life? Where do we get our values from, and what are the ultimate values? And the value that all ways are equally valid is a value that I reject."

Michael Farris, executive director, Home School Legal Defense Fund

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"We don't believe in discrimination of races or other nationalities of foreigners coming in. But neither do we believe in the humanists trying to discriminate against those Christians who really were the ones who began America. It was the Protestants who first came over, who began the United States of America. And yet today, in many areas in many schools, we're finding the greatest discrimination is going on against those very people who stem from the roots of our great nation."

Beverly LaHaye, Concerned Women for America

VIEWPOINTS: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RIGHT

In this section, you will hear from prominent leaders in the New Right's crusade to clean up public schools.

Their views and suggestions offer insight into how a national organization works to encourage and empower people at the grass-roots level to instrument changes in their community schools. The comments also provide a glimpse into how these leaders and those who sympathize with them interpret the workings—and what they perceive to be the failings—of the public school system.

Eric Buehrer: Citizens for Excellence in Education

Citizens for Excellence in Education, an arm of the conservative National Association of Christian Educators, is active at both the national and grass-roots level in challenging what is taught and learned in public schools.

According to Eric Buehrer, executive vice president of NACE/CEE, "the current 'standard procedure' for handling parental complaints about books and curriculum is inadequate."

He notes that "a large percentage" of the calls he receives "are from parents who have filed a formal complaint, filled out all the forms, waited and waited while an advisory committee decides what to recommend to the board. The sad thing is, I now sound like a mind reader to the parents who call me. Before they tell me the outcome of the committee, I can tell them what it was: 'The committee had several meetings over a period of many months and concluded that with a few minute changes the curriculum should remain untouched.' "

" 'Yes!' the parents say, 'how did you know?' "

"It's really very simple," Buehrer continues. "It happens most of the time. The parents come away feeling disenfranchised, unrepresented, and uncared for. Those feelings turn into anger, hostility, or, at best, apathy toward a system they once embraced with hope and enthusiasm."

Buehrer's comments point to the need for school board members to go beyond policy. They need to approach curricula critics with both tolerance and creativity.

In an effort to arrive at a "solution," Buehrer offers the following recommendations, which, he stresses, "are not official positions of the NACE/CEE—just some ideas I have come up with that at least warrant some discussion."

- **Problem:** Parental input is often sought after the fact in textbook, curriculum, or policy selection.
  Solution: In good faith, seek out parents to examine materials. Advertise for parental and citizen involvement; accept applications. Notify parents that "a commitment of 'X' number of meetings and 'Y' amount of outside study will be expected. Perhaps even advertise the advisory committee as a step toward being on the school board—a kind of non voting, board-member-in-training."
- **Problem:** In instituting a new program of study, school boards often try to rally support for only one particular program. Parents who object to that program "are either stonewalled or patronized."
  Solution: Allow parents and citizens to be part of a "search" process for the new program or course of study. Include the clergy, parent-teacher organizations, community service organizations, and parents with children in the school system. "The superintendent could announce the goal and provide parents with various resources. Parents could then form study groups and use their own contacts and network to find several alternative programs to examine."
- **Problem:** School board members, in many instances, seem to be a "rubber stamp for the superintendent," depending too heavily on the schools chief for guidance in decision making. "This is understandable since the administrators are seen as the experts and the school board is often made up of good people with too little time to really study an issue."
  Solution: Parent advisory committees to aid the board in making decisions based on a broad input of information.
- **Problem:** "School board meetings are ineffective for serious parental input."
  Solution: Set aside a "regular time to meet with parents and sense the mood of the community. Just as a legislative representative spends time with his constituency, a school board member should do the same."

Michael Farris: Home School Legal Defense Fund

Michael Farris, executive director of the Home School Legal Defense Fund and former head of the Washington state chapter of the Moral Majority, offers these suggestions to school boards:

- **Broaden your base when seeking community input.** "School boards typically get PTA hacks who are of the same mindset as the NEA and People for the American Way. Or, if they want a Christian perspective, they go down and get the United Methodist minister. That isn't going to hack it. I have as much in common with a United Methodist minister as I do a Buddhist monk."

  Farris suggests that school boards "retain the PTA people and the United Methodist minister, but also go find some hard-core, conservative fundamental evangelicals or Pentecostals—as well as whatever other groups are represented in the community—and get their input on issues."
- **Offer a way out.** "Allow parents to opt their children out of anything they want to. And allow alternatives. If you have a controversial thing, if you've offended one family, or 10 percent of the families, let them opt out." Likewise, he adds, "if you've adopted something that offends a significant minority, wisdom says, 'Don't shove it down their throat: Get something else.' "
- **Be reasonable.** As for opting out, Farris says parents should "use some common sense." A request such as: " 'I don't want you to ever mention this particular issue' is really hard to administrate,' " he says. "That's an impossible request and I don't think the school board's under any duty, moral or legal, to honor such a request."

  But, he adds, if the parents say: " 'I don't want my kid to participate in a sex education curriculum,' or, 'I don't want my kid to participate in this chunk of the sex education curriculum,' or, 'When Planned Parenthood comes in and passes out condoms for the class, I don't want them in the class that day,' or, 'I don't want them to read this particular book,' those are discreet, specific requests (that) are administratively doable."
- **Tell parents in advance what you plan to do.** "If you have Planned Parenthood coming into your school system, you better tell parents in advance that you're going to do that, because you're going to have a big firestorm afterwards if you don't. If you tell them in advance and allow parents to opt out, the firestorm is going to be either extinguished or slowed down considerably."
- **And, finally:** "If you want to continue to drive fundamental and evangelical Christians out of the public schools, then keep doing what you're doing—you'll drive us all out."

Mel and Norma Gabler: Educational Research Analysts

In their book *What Are They Teaching Our Children?*, textbook critics Mel and Norma Gabler advise parents on ways they can work to rid schools of "offensive" books.[25]

- **It's better to deal with an offensive book before it's purchased.** "Once in the classroom, it's virtually impossible to get a bad book out. School officials will ask you to fill out a long form, listing in detail what you don't like. They'll defend their decision to buy the book. They'll hassle you with arguments. They'll plead budgetary restraints. They'll wear you down with meetings and consultations. Only if the book gets a lot of bad publicity will they be likely to act. Even then, you'll be regarded as a troublemaker and your child may suffer. All this just to get rid of one bad book!"
- **You're not alone.** Not all school personnel accept "the doctrines of 'progressive' education" but "peer and job pressures keep many from speaking out." Likewise, "school board members are much like teachers. Many agree with us as individuals. But get them together at a public meeting and they'll most invariably defend the professionals they have hired. We've never met a board member who read a textbook—unless a parent had challenged him to or a protest movement was under way. Many are bamboozled by school administrators (who haven't read the books, either) to believe that any parent who objects to a textbook is a troublemaker."
- **Join others.** "Build a parents' group for strength and concerted action. Though you shouldn't depend solely on the PTA for help, you can gain clout by being involved with this organization."
- **Recruit friends.** "Show them marked copies of objectionable portions in actual textbooks."
- **Get educated.** "Write your state education office for information on how textbooks are adopted. Ask how parents can be involved. Request the rules of procedure."
- **Be selective.** "Take one subject area of particular concern one year, such as social studies, then examine literature the next, and history the next. Or assign various subjects or subtopics to review among members of your group."
- **Review carefully.** "Read the books closely yourself. Look at the headings, subheads, and illustrations. Ponder the methodology. Blatantly offensive material will jump out at you. It's more important for you to grasp the humanistic and immoral philosophies that are being *subtly* promoted. Look to see how information is balanced, pro and con, on controversial issues."
- **Use Gabler textbook reviews.** "These can save you countless hours of painstaking examination, but use our reviews only as a starter . . . We examine textbooks for content which stresses problems, but few solutions; emphasizes America's failings, rather than achievements; condones immorality and ignores morality; attacks religion and Christianity, but gives no suggestion of their benefits; belittles biblical statements or treats them as myths; teaches the occult, but does not warn of its dangers; presents evidence for evolution as though it were established fact, but censors empirically tested scientific evidence against evolution; destroys confidence in traditional values; slights parents and their teachings; constantly emphasizes change without absolutes or fixed values; and stresses realism, but only from a negative view."

Adapted from: *What Are They Teaching Our Children?* by Mel and Norma Gabler with James C. Hefley, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1985, pp.164-169 with permission. (See Appendix B for a sample textbook review by the Gablers.)

Phyllis Schlafly: The Eagle Forum

Phyllis Schlafly, in *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, offers parents a checklist to use to evaluate public school programs and materials.[26]

In the excerpts below, the word "it," as noted in Schlafly's book, "can be a curriculum, a textbook, a film, a teacher's manual, computer courseware, a workbook, mimeographed papers, or extracurricular activities."

- Is it anti-parent? Does it lead the child to believe that parents are ignorant, old-fashioned or out of touch with the modern world?
- Is it anti-parent and anti-religion by leading the child to reject the moral standards and values he has been taught in home and church? Does it lead the child to believe that there are no absolute moral standards, but that the morality of an act depends on the situation?
- Does it present information which depresses the child, leads him to a negative view of himself, his family, his country, or his future?

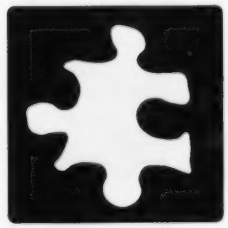
Does it produce fear, guilt, and despair in the child, instead of faith in his family and country, and hope in the future?

- Does it affirmatively teach the ideology of secular humanism or that all religions are equally valid? Does it have a constant questioning of values, standards, and authority and teach that all moral decisions and lifestyles are equally to be respected?
- Does it attack the child's religious faith by ridiculing the belief that God created the Earth? Does it spend class time on such anti-religious elements as the occult, witchcraft, or astrology?
- Does it spend class time on lessons, exercises, and questions about feelings and attitudes, rather than teaching knowledge, facts, and traditional basic skills?
- Does it force the child to answer questionnaires or surveys that probe into the child's or his family's attitudes, feelings, behavior, customs, or political preferences, all of which invade the family's privacy and are none of the school's business?
- Does it force the child to confront adult problems which are too complex and unsuitable for his tender years, such as nuclear war?
- Does it blur traditional concepts of gender identity and force the child to accept the radical notion of a gender-free society in which there are no differences in attitudes and occupations between men and women? Does it induce role reversals by showing women in hard physical-labor jobs and men as house-husbands?
- Does it describe America as an unjust society (unfair to economic or racial groups or to women) rather than telling the truth that America has given more freedom and opportunity to more people than any nation in the history of the world?
- Does it debunk the American private enterprise system and lead the child to believe that socialism is better? Does it make the child feel guilty about our high standard of living? Does it lead the child to believe that government spending programs are the formula for economic prosperity, rather than hard work and perseverance?
- Does it propagandize for domestic spending programs while attacking defense spending and economy in government? Does it lead the child to believe that disarmament rather than defense can prevent a future war?

Source: *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, edited by Phyllis Schlafly, Pere Marquette Press, Alton, IL, 1985, p. 438-439. Excerpted with permission. (See Appendix C for Schlafly's sample letter for parents.)

"That censorship pressure is irrational also seems a reasonable judgment. Five of the most popular (and scholarly) dictionaries were disapproved for use in Texas. As a result, in several other communities in the United States . . . dictionaries were also attacked. Apparently, for young people to be able to read dictionary definitions of such widely used words as 'bed,' 'fag,' 'horny,' 'hot,' and 'knock' (as in 'knock up') is believed by some people to influence their moral judgments and actions. I submit that this is patently irrational."

Lee Burress, *Virginia English Bulletin*, Spring 1986



STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Managing Controversy

Individual and small-group challengers often use the expertise and resources of larger organizations. These organizations—liberal or conservative—have done their homework. They know how to mobilize, publicize, and dramatize at both the national and grass-roots level.

To ensure an open forum for debate on the merits of a challenge, a school board must also be prepared, so as not to be blind-sided by a censorship challenge and resulting controversy, in which decisions are made to "smooth things over"—and not in reflection of sound educational objectives.

Toward that end, J. Charles Park, a leading researcher on conservative coalitions,[27] and James R. Larson, who "survived" an "encounter with the New Right" as assistant superintendent for instruction in the Sylvania, Ohio, city schools[28] offer these suggestions:

- *Park:* **Follow democratic procedures.** Don't deny rights to those with whom you disagree; recognize each citizen's right to question school policies and decisions.
- *Larson:* **Don't relinquish legal rights.** Citizen advisory groups should do just that—advise. Potential members should know *and accept* the power and limitations of such groups *before* they agree to serve.
- *Larson:* **Form advisory groups carefully.** Using standing committees might leave out the very groups that need to be heard. (For example, a standing group of area clergy might not include a representative of a fundamentalist denomination, which may be issuing the challenges.
- *Park:* **Educate the community about democracy.** Continually stress the role of public education in a democratic society.
- *Park and Larson:* **Research coalitions active in your community.** These groups are often predictable because they follow similar patterns. Keep an eye on their growth.
- *Larson:* **Educate staff members on the New Right's agenda and vocabulary.** Don't wait for issues to surface before you act.
- Larson: **Understand that positions taken often reflect religious convictions.** People will not easily negotiate away or compromise their beliefs.
- *Park:* **Do not try to alter the perceptions of extremists.** Attempt to reach people in the middle. It is a waste of time and energy to try to change the mind of someone who believes that he or she has "found the truth."
- *Park:* **Beware of scapegoating.** Pay attention to those in the community who are "hurting." Often they will look for a scapegoat on which to blame their troubles. The school is an easy target.
- *Park:* **Put your educational philosophy in writing.** When confronted, be prepared for strong arguments. Don't back off; stand behind your beliefs.
- *Park:* **Practice conflict.** Use role-playing activities to work on "keeping your cool" under inflammatory conditions.
- *Park:* **Expect to be labeled.** A controversy divides the community into two camps: right and wrong. Expect to be attacked verbally, but don't reciprocate. Speak to matters that unify, not to those that divide.
- *Larson:* **Remain polite, patient, and soft-spoken.** Using excessively strong words can bring sympathy to the "underdog" who is challenging the "bureaucracy."
- *Larson:* **Expect your comments to be made public.** This is true whether or not statements were made in confidence. Count on being misinterpreted, often with your own writings or comments used to make an opponent's point.
- *Larson:* **Analyze accusations.** When accused of not listening, it often means you are not doing what a group wants you to do. Recognize the difference between *having your say* and *getting your way.*
- *Larson:* **Recognize that honesty may go unnoticed.** Be prepared to have honest mistakes—whether of omission or commission—viewed as deliberate deceptions.
- *Park:* **Anticipate mushrooming.** Things will get worse before they get better. Concerns develop; controversy and strong feelings grow.
- *Larson:* **Contain the tension.** Have as much attention as possible focused on the central office—and away from principals, teachers, and students. Do so to promote consistency in school district responses and to shield students from flying words.
- *Larson:* **Resist accepting every invitation to debate.** Exchanges often sustain controversy, not ease it. Be aware of the audience involved. (For example, is the debate to be before an audience from your school district, or before an audience representing the entire metropolitan area?)
- *Park:* **Speak to reporters.** Airing issues can defuse controversy.
- *Park:* **Be available.** Educators, administrators, and librarians under attack may need counseling and support.
- *Park:* **Network.** Gather tips and insights from educators who have encountered similar experiences.

RALLYING CRIES

In educational circles, it's not uncommon to hear teachers, administrators, and school board members claim ignorance when it comes to the meaning of the term "secular humanism."

They are not alone.

A comprehensive survey on the place of religion in American public life found that "most Americans are unfamiliar with the term 'secular humanism,' but those who are aware of it (26 percent) are divided as to whether the schools are teaching it (11 percent of the total sample think they are; 8 percent think they aren't)."[29]

Edward B. Jenkinson of Indiana University figures that "probably no more than 3 percent of public school teachers and administrators in the country know about—let alone have read—either *Humanist Manifesto,*" upon which the secular humanism movement is based. He bases that estimate "on speeches to hundreds of educators throughout the nation in which I ask them if they can define secular humanism and how many of them have read either *Humanist Manifesto I* or *II*. I have never counted more than eight raised hands in audiences ranging from 10 to 2,000."[30]

Yet to hear those in the so-called religious right tell it, there is an all-encompassing effort in public education to denounce Christianity and to promote secular humanism—defined loosely as a religion based in the belief of man, not God.

"I have never met an administrator or anybody who says, 'I'm a secular humanist,' " Eric Buehrer of the National Association of Christian Educators said in an interview. "They may not say it, they may not think of themselves that way, and they may even acknowledge that there is a God. But they make their decisions about school as if there is no God, or, if there is a God, he's irrelevant."

In their book *What Are They Teaching Our Children?,* Mel and Norma Gabler maintain that "in the ideology of 'progressive' education, humanism functions as a religion with defined dogmas." They maintain that public school teachings and practices promote humanist beliefs, among them that "man is his own authority and is not accountable to any higher power" and that "there are no absolute rules by which to live."[31]

Secular humanism, though, is but one term used by those who criticize public schools. Other terms frequently used in challenges against public school teachings and practices include "creationism," "values clarification," "invasion of privacy," "globalism," the "occult," "usurping parental authority," "negativism," and "new ageism."

Call it the language of dissent, the rallying cries for a cause that seeks to correct and reshape the nature and mission of public schools.

"Nationwide there is a recurrent use of what we call a language of censorship: a collection of catchphrases that become scare tactics," the Rev. Charles Bergstrom of People For the American Way said at the NSBA forum. "These terms and the ideas (they represent) are promoted by the same groups; they appear in more than half of the incidents that have been reported."

According to People For the American Way, these terms have become "part of our national vocabulary" and are "used as the basis for a general attack on public education and for specific attempts to ban books, programs, and ideas from public schools."[32]

The group notes further that the terms—"an effective tactic for creating confusion and fear in communities across the country"—have several things in common:[33]

- Most of the terms "can ultimately be traced to the literature and pronouncements of several national groups—Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America; Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, the National Association of Christian Educators/Citizens for Excellence in Education; and Mel and Norma Gabler's Educational Research Analysts."
- The terms "have a common purpose: to oppose teaching children to think critically and independently, to understand different views and beliefs, and to appreciate the diversity of our society."
- The terms are "used without any attempt at precision. Their very vagueness—one critic compared defining secular humanism to nailing jello to a tree—is their great virtue. They are broad enough to encompass most any subject, and are used to challenge any materials, methods, and ideas found objectionable."

Yet those who use these terms in their challenges would disagree that they are using "vague" terms to "create confusion." They insist there is a concerted effort among liberal interests, such as the National Education Association, to use its own language of censorship to direct social change. Its lexicon, they say, includes such words as "pluralism" and "realism"; educators are "change agents" promoting a "progressive" system of education.

"A lot of public educators will call themselves 'change agents'; they're agents of cultural change. But the parents don't want them to be change agents. And so there's a dilemma," Buehrer says.

As the Gablers note in their book: " 'Change' is the battle cry of 'progressive' educators. Society, they tell us, is changing. Religions, governments, mores, and morals—all are changing. Nothing is stable, permanent, eternal. No institution, idea, or loyalty ever remains static. Family, marriage, chastity, fidelity—all are being reshaped. And what institution will serve to usher in these changes? According to these same educators, it will be our schools. . . . They will help our young people leave behind old lifestyles and beliefs to become more human and more humane."[34]

This concept of change—discarding the old and embracing the new—underlies much of the debate over censorship challenges. To manage controversy, the parties involved need to understand each other's concerns. In this regard, it helps to understand the language used in confrontation. The following are among the most common terms.

Secular Humanism

"Religion is back in the classroom," the Gablers say, "in the form of humanism, a religion of supreme idolatry that puts man, not God, at the center of all."[35] In an informational handout, they trace the spread of humanism to educator John Dewey and his ability to win "widespread acceptance" for the movement in the educational establishment.[36]

According to the Gablers, public school practices and textbooks advance the tenets of secular humanism, among them that "man is his own authority," that "there are no absolute rules by which to live," and that "all should be exposed to diverse 'realistic' viewpoints." They maintain that humanism is being advanced in public schools when students are encouraged through readings or classroom practices to think for themselves, to make value judgments, to question authority, and to apply their own morality standards. Among the subjects that bear the hallmarks of secular humanism are sex education, drug counseling, and evolution.

"The assumption that there is more than one right way is an assumption that has been identified as a secular humanist value," Michael Farris of the Home School Legal Defense Fund said in an interview. "And that, to people like me, is a religion, because a religion is a philosophy that answers all the issues of life. That is, where did man come from? Is there a God? Is God relevant to daily life? Where do we get our values from, and what are the ultimate values? And the value that all ways are equally valid is a value that I reject."

In 1987, two courts ruled in favor of fundamentalist parents who brought their charge of secular humanism before the bench. In Mobile, Ala., Judge W. Brevard Hand upheld the banning of 44 history, social studies, and home economics textbooks on the grounds that they advocated the "religion" of secular humanism. In Hawkins County, Tenn., a group of parents successfully sued the school district on the grounds that a reading series promoted secular humanism and showed a systematic bias against their faith.

Both cases were overturned on appeals. But the controversy over secular humanism remains. According to People For the American Way, "secular humanism is the broadest and vaguest accusation leveled at public education; its definition lies in the eyes of the beholder."[37]

According to a 1986 report on censorship, in the view of those who use the term, secular humanism "is the attention given in literature courses to erotic themes. It is the emphasis in American history courses on the unequal distribution of wealth. It is Darwin's theory of evolution. It is reduced attention to the values of family, patriotism, and God. It is the prevalence in the schools of an 'atheistic philosophy' that is in conflict with the principles of a 'Christian nation.' "[38]

According to Jenkinson, because Dewey was one of among 33 "liberal humanists" who signed *Humanist Manifesto I* in 1933, and B.F. Skinner, another prominent educators, signed *Humanist Manifesto II* in 1973, "it follows—goes the argument—that all educators subscribe to the tenets of the manifestos, which members of the New Right call the bibles of public school teachers."[39]

But, he notes, "regardless how much is written about secular humanism and how many definitions are circulated, it is interesting that few persons can define the religion of secular humansim . . . What, then, is secular humanism? As used by the critics of the public schools, it seems to be a 'buzzword' that is applied to anything that the critics do not like and want to remove from the schools."[40]

New Ageism

When the school board in East Gibson in Oakland City, Ind., adopted a thinking skills program, opponents said it was an attempt to hypnotize and brainwash students through meditation and mind control. According to a news service account of the event, one parent complained that the teaching method was

linked to new age mysticism, which promotes the tenets of Eastern religions.[41]

The article notes that "some scholars and fundamentalists are looking at attacks using the new age brand as an evolution of the secular humanism movement." Jenkinson was quoted as saying that "it was easy to detect two or three years ago that if the attack on secular humanism failed, new age was next."[42]

Buehrer provides materials and advice to parents in their fight against curricula and teaching methods they believe promote new ageism.

In an interview, Buehrer noted an article in which a new ager is quoted as saying: "One of the biggest advantages we have . . . is once the occult metaphysical and 'new age' terminology is removed, we have concepts and techniques that are very acceptable to the general public, so we can change the names and demonstrate the power."

Buehrer contends that the new agers believe that if they "take away all terminology that might be offensive to people, then we can teach our religion to society and people will enjoy it."

Occult

According to People For the American Way, "activities that mention witches, goblins, magic, satan, or the supernatural have come under attack for 'teaching the occult' and promoting 'satanism,' thereby violating the religious beliefs of students. This term has been used to challenge books, stories, and such activities as a school Halloween party, a school mascot called the Sun Devil, and a fortune-telling booth at a high school fair."[43]

Buehrer acknowledges that "a lot of this stuff is just seen as playful." But, he adds, "we're saying, 'Hey, look. We want kids to have fun, we want them to use their imagination. But my gosh, there's thousands of things you can choose from. Why are we seeing all this stuff about witches?'. . . Just off the top of your head, you could think of dozens of different imaginary adventures that kids could really get into."

Negativism

The Gablers maintain that "too much of the literature which children are required to study in public schools follows depressive, negative themes." Under the heading "negative thinking," they instruct their textbook reviewers to look for works that deal with alienation, death and suicide, discontentment, a lack of respect, low goals, or a lack of motivation. They ask their reviewers to look for items that are degrading or humiliating, depressing, frightening and horrifying, or hate inspiring. And the reviewers are asked to consider whether the works stress problems or promote skepticism.[44]

"In many texts," the Gablers say, "these themes predominate over the few stories that stress goodness, generosity, honesty, respect for law, love of country, honor of parents, motivation for attaining high goals, and simple beauty."[45]

But many oppose offering a filtered view of life; showing only the good and not the bad. According to People For the American Way, negativism is "a catch-all term used to object to classroom materials that reflect unpleasant aspects of history or contemporary society. This criticism has embraced such diverse subjects as teenage suicide, discussions of death, exploration of the confusions of growing up, and examination of such issues as nuclear war, poverty, slavery, and the Holocaust."[46]

Buehrer counters that a child would receive an "incomplete education" if such topics as nuclear war, poverty, or the confusing nature of growing up would be abandoned. The issue, he says, is balance: "We had one school district having the kids write poems about 'after the nuclear war.' I read those poems and I thought, 'No wonder these kids are killing themselves.' This was the most depressing stuff I'd ever read. And I thought, 'Where's the balance in this? Is there any discussion about nuclear weapons as deterrents to war?' "

Values Clarification

Values clarification is the name of a specific approach to the teaching of values. Many public school critics believe that almost every teacher in almost every school advocates this approach and is asking students to, in the words of the Gablers, trade their "personal convictions for the norm of the group."[47]

Under the approach, a value must be freely chosen, chosen from alternatives, chosen after careful consideration of the consequences, prized and/or cherished, publicly affirmed, acted upon, and acted upon regularly.[48]

Members of the New Right, however, are not alone in their opposition to courses in values clarification or in moral development. According to Diane Ravitch, such courses have been "criticized by responsible educators" in a variety of professional publications.

"Typically, these courses pretend to be value-free, since children are supposed to think through and clarify their own values," Ravitch noted in a lecture before the Education Writers Association in April

1982. "Critics complain that the courses are not value-free at all, but either teach moral relativism or contain a hidden value preference. These courses often include certain strategies, like class voting on values (which some critics feel pits family values against peer group pressures) or invitations to the student to disclose confidences to the teachers (critics complain that the teacher is cast as a therapist, which teachers seldom are)."

Another area of concern, she notes, are "packaged moral dilemmas, which are supposed to give the student the experience of reaching a moral decision. In one such dilemma, a man is told that his wife will die if she does not have a certain medicine, but he cannot afford to pay for the medicine. Problem: Should he let his wife die or should he steal the drug from the pharmacist? Children agonize over this choice, reluctant to cause the death of a loved one or to break the law. Occasionally, a smart child asks, 'But can't the man borrow some money from a friend?' This alternative, however, is not one of the choices available."

These dilemmas—also known as "situation ethics"—are, according to Ravitch, "a distorted version of Horace Mann's advice to keep controversy out of the school. Operating on the mistaken assumption that there are few shared values that can be taught without indoctrinating, such courses suggest that all values are relative and subjective. It is not surprising that they have been criticized by reputable educators and philosophers."

But the values clarification charge is not limited to these specific types of courses, which have been banned in many schools. The charge is levied also against teachings and practices considered educationally sound. According to People For the American Way, "sex education, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, and decision-making skills programs have been charged with teaching values clarification or situation ethics, as have such activities as role-playing and open-ended discussion . . . The term is used to oppose any kind of debate or classroom exchange that gives students the chance to express their own thoughts and feelings or to wrestle with ambiguous or controversial topics."[49]

Globalism

Globalism, says People For the American Way, "refers to materials or activities that place the United States in an international context, encourage children to understand other nations and cultures, and adopt an international perspective on issues." The term is also used to challenge "discussion of issues that have global implications—for example, war, world population, world resources, and poverty."[50]

In an informational handout on "humanism" and "moral relativism," the Gablers denounce "global citizenship: the belief that a one-world government should replace national self-determination." They note that according to *Humanist Manifesto II*, ". . . the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community . . ." And then, using excerpts from textbooks, they maintain that the principle is being upheld in public schools. For example, one excerpt notes that: "Many people think a stronger U.N. or a new international organization is needed if we and the other peoples of the world are to move safely into the 21st century. Only a stronger world body, they argue, can meet tomorrow's challenges . . ."[51]

"Global citizenship," the Gablers contend, "violates a biblical principal: 'So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth.' "[52]

Section Two: The Challengers

NOTES

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6. Ibid., p. 175.
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31. *What Are They Teaching Our Children?*, p. 43.
32. People For the American Way, *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn, 1986-1987 Report*, p. 21.
33. Ibid.
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41. "New Age Teaching Methods Under Attack," Ed-Line wire service article, July 7, 1988.
42. Ibid.
43. *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn*, p. 23.
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50. Ibid., p. 23.
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Section Three: THE MISSION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

WHAT IS PUBLIC EDUCATION?

In the debate over censorship one thing stands clear: "If every group of parents who dissented from the schools' values created a new school there would be no dilemma, and there would be no public schools."

So stated Diane Ravitch, professor of history and education at Teachers College, Columbia University, in delivering the Martin Buskin Memorial Lecture at the Education Writers Association seminar in April 1982. In her lecture, which concerned public schools and censorship, she noted that "the basic dilemma of the public school in a pluralistic society has always been the same: Should the school reflect and transmit the values of the local community or should it consciously try to change children's values?"

To arrive at a solution to this dilemma, school officials must arrive at answers to a series of questions:

- What is public education?
- What should be taught in public schools?
- Who should decide and how?

To the Rev. Charles Bergstrom of People For the American Way, questions like these raise "the real large issue before us."

"It's not the controversies," he said at the NSBA forum, "but what kind of public education do we want? What's to be the future of society for the young people now in our public schools? What do we hold dear that should be transmitted to future generations? What do children need to know to sustain traditions and cultures but also to be able, responsible citizens?"

Robert C. Small Jr. of Virginia Tech notes that those concerned with education should consider the following "vital" questions:[1]

- How much control should the citizens of a community have over what the schools teach?
- How much selection should they do?
- How far from the beliefs of those citizens should the school stray?
- How much should the school, in fact, conflict with those beliefs?
- Should teachers see their roles as missionaries bringing the truth (by which is meant *their* truth) to benighted people?

Answers to questions like these will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. And in each instance there will be no one right answer. The goal is to arrive at a consensus, a working definition that will serve as the foundation for curricula and textbook decisions and for the drafting of sound policies and procedures.

To reach a consensus, a debate must be initiated. And whenever there is a debate over the mission of public education, the experts are ready. In this case, the experts are parents, students, and anyone else who has been in school, sends a child to school, or has a vested interest in the products of schooling—which is just about everybody. And then there are the experts with professional training—teachers, librarians, and administrators—who bring to the debate their expertise and experience in working with children and in managing classrooms, libraries, and schoolhouses.

When the smoke clears, the school board must be ready to issue a decision that will not only pacify, but also unify the parties involved; not only support, but also build the foundation of public schooling.

In his review of hundreds of articles on school censorship, Small found that the pieces dealt with three areas: specific censorship cases and their causes, arguments against censorship and in support of the "freedom to read," and advice to educators and school officials on how to prepare for, and handle, censorship attacks.[2]

Among the most glaring omissions from these articles, he notes, is a discussion of the school's historical role in society. "Such discussions of censorship," Small notes, "fail to recognize that schools have a relation to the society that causes them to come into existence and that schools have an educational purpose, the direction of which is not absolute but rather a matter of opinion."[3]

According to Small, "schools have traditionally been places where students were, at least officially, protected from many aspects of the world, not exposed to them or prepared for them. Certain clear, generally agreed upon notions about what was right and good and clean and, thus, what was appropriate for children governed the curriculum of American schools for most of the their history. Although much has changed in American society and in the makeup of the school since those early days, these general notions about the appropriate have probably changed little, at least among parents."[4]

In this historical context, he says, "any material in textbooks which was not idealized, aimed at perfecting, uplifting, and free from the sordid, ugly, or unpleasant aspects of life was obviously poorly chosen . . . Society sees the schools as preserving and improving on the cultural heritage, inspiring stu-

dents to success and reasonable virtue. It does not, I think, see the schools as attacking fundamental beliefs, even if those beliefs might, in fact, be seen as prejudices by many professional educators."[5]

And so, he says, when parents and other members of the community "march upon the school to demand removal of stories with curse words, novels that are partly about the sex lives of characters, and poems that show America to be less than perfect, they do so, therefore, in, not against, the historical tradition."[6]

Therein lies the challenge facing school board members and others concerned with defining the mission of public education: How to reach a consensus on goals and objectives in a society that is increasingly diverse.

Onalee McGraw, a member of the National Council on Educational Research and a former policy analyst with the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, discusses this movement from "consensus to fragmentation" in the Spring 1986 edition of the *Virginia English Bulletin*.

"The rationale for the American public school system," she says, "rests on the premises that (1) there is an American neighborhood-based common culture and (2) the values and beliefs underlying that culture represent a consensus among all the various religious and ethnic groups comprising American society."[7]

That consensus, she argues, has fallen apart. She notes the retreat of many Catholics, Jews, and minority groups to private schools. "The establishment of separate schools," she says, "is a reflection of the great importance of education as formation of the human person rather than mere technical training in 'skills' to become a productive member of society."[8] She further notes that in 1962, the Supreme Court ruled "that specific acknowledgment of God as the Supreme Being of the universe expressed in prayer was unconstitutional by virtue of the court's definition of separation of church and state." The effect of this decision, she says, "was to accelerate the secularization of the public classroom and heavily to tip the balance there in favor of the intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment," which she maintains is in conflict with the Judeo-Christian-classical tradition.[9]

The resulting dilemma is one that Horace Mann, who is often called the father of the public school movement, envisioned, but did not really have to face.

Horace Mann, Ravitch said in her lecture, "feared that the common schools would be torn apart if they took any point of view in matters of controversy. He warned that if the schools began to indoctrinate children with political beliefs, the schools would soon be destroyed by struggles for control of the curriculum and by the withdrawal of the children of angry parents. The common school could not survive, he warned, if teachers tried to persuade children to sympathize with a particular political party or to join this or that religious denomination. All that a school should do, Mann believed, is to enable each child to think for himself and to make his own judgments about controversial issues."

But, as Ravitch notes, Mann "was able to take this posture of apparent neutrality because his society shared basic moral values which were beyond controversy. At present, when common values are constantly under siege, the absence of a shared consensus creates serious difficulties for the common schools."

Those difficulties, however, need not drive a wedge into the public school system. For example, as the New Right attacks sex education and the teaching of values, those on the defensive can re-examine the context in which these areas are incorporated into the curriculum and reassess the directions they take. As Ravitch notes, "a good curriculum was never impaired by full disclosure. The only danger to any book or curriculum occurs when it is misrepresented by half-truths and distortions. Parents have a right to know what their children are being taught, and school officials should be eager and ready to carry their case to the public."

"Today, we certainly are hearing a diversity of voices and a diversity of views on the mission of public education and on the role of religion in our public institutions, including the public schools. But I believe we also are hearing the beginning of a new consensus: that we as Americans share a core of moral and civic values and that our public schools can and should do more to discuss these values, if not transmit them. First and foremost among our shared American values, I believe, is a celebration of diversity and a respect for the beliefs of others."

Norman Lear, television producer and founder of People For the American Way, *Values, Pluralism, and Public Education*, 1987 conference

What Should Be Taught in Public Schools?

What should American children be learning in schools today?

Each community will answer that question differently, and within each community differences of opinion will surface. In some cases, what stands as the truth today will ring hollow tomorrow; what requires attention today was an undiscovered area of knowledge yesterday, as in AIDS education.

So what is it that students should learn?

On one side are those people who believe the schools should stick to the "basics:" Teach the children how to read, write, and calculate, and, if you do this effectively, there won't be time left over to discuss values or controversial topics. Let the home—the family, the parents—worry about a child's moral development. Prepare children to face the world, not to fear the world. Let their studies reflect the best life has to offer, and the best will come out of them when, as adults, they confront the imperfect world.

On the other side are those who believe it is essential to go beyond the "the three R's" and to develop in students—some of whom have no moral training at home—the ability to think critically, to set and defend their values, and to confront and assess the myriad of mixed messages and choices society, the media, and their peers throw at them. Students must be prepared to play a part in the imperfect world, and that means they must sometimes read and discuss materials that uncover matters that are controversial, unpleasant, or just plain foreign. After all, the public school is a microcosm of society and it is in the school that people of diverse cultures and beliefs can meet and learn to tolerate and appreciate each other's differences.

"Public education in America is public, not because it's free, (but) because its purpose rather is to prepare children for their roles as active citizens in a pluralistic democracy so that there's a place for children of diverse faiths and backgrounds to come together," says the Rev. Charles Bergstrom.

"A child is born into a family, he's raised and nurtured by the family. He should grow up representing the values of the home where he stems from, and not have the school tamper with that."

Beverly LaHaye, Concerned Women for America

But Michael Farris, executive director of the Home School Legal Defense Fund, and former head of the Washington state chapter of the Moral Majority, calls this "a bunch of highfalutin' hogwash." The purpose of public education, he said in an interview, "in a sentence is very simple: It's just 'to teach kids whose parents want them taught.' If you ask parents what they want, they want their kids to learn to read and to write, to know objectively the history of this country, geography . . . and to be able to use logical reasoning, to be able to distinguish truth from error."

But whose truth? Whose error?

Farris counters that there are plenty of things "that everyone would understand to be false." And some people—including those who would normally find themselves in dispute with Farris—would agree.

"Without setting forth any political or religious ideology, the schools can teach the values of honesty, fairness, responsibility, industry, courage, courtesy, and good citizenship," said education professor Diane Ravitch in the Martin Buskin Memorial Lecture she delivered at the Education Writers Association seminar in April 1982.

"Such values," she notes, "are best taught, I believe, not in courses, but as part of the curriculum and behavioral expectations of the school community. It would not be difficult to expand the list of shared values. There is a very simple basis to the moral education that public schools can endorse, and it is one that the overwhelming majority of parents subscribe to: 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' " Good old Horace Mann set it forward as the formula for moral education in the public schools, and I doubt that anyone has come up with a better idea."

When taking a turn to the specific, however, the debate over what should be taught in public schools heats up. Debaters quickly take sides: It is a right-or-wrong proposition. Take, for example, the issue of sex education.

"The idea has been around for a long time that more education on the subject (of teenage sexuality) would cut venereal disease, would cut teenage pregnancies, would cut abortions; all these things would be solved if we just had more and more sex education," Farris says. "Well, look at the record. We've had more and more sex education over the past 20 years, and where are the teenage sexuality practices? We've got more pregnancy, more VD, more abortions, more everything. And education has just proved to be a dismal failure (because) their ability to teach from a moral perspective is zero. Therefore, sex education tends to be a how-to-do-it course as opposed to a preventative kind of thing."

Those who argue in favor of sex education—particularly in a society where sexual freedom is shouted from the billboards, the movie screens, and the television sets—state their position just as strongly: Kids need to learn to sort through the conflicting messages they receive at home and on the street and to develop a healthy—and safe—attitude toward sex.

But Ravitch finds a middle ground. At first, she says, she was confused by the controversy because polls showed most parents to be in favor of sex education. Then she took a look at three sex education textbooks, "all from major publishers and all used in public schools."

One book, she notes, "contains full information about reproduction and venereal disease; its central value is that most people want 'a happy marriage . . . and a loving family.' It urges teenagers to exercise responsibility in their sexual behavior and to be aware that 'premature intimate activity' may lead to unhappy results, such as an unwanted marriage or an unwanted pregnancy."

Neither of the two other books, however, caution adolescents "to exercise self-restraint in their sexual activity, and neither places much value on monogamy or fidelity," Ravitch notes. "The second book, cited by the American Library Association as one of the 'Best Books for Young Adults in 1978,' suggests that there is no normal pattern of sexual development, that just as some people prefer 'mushrooms, caviar, wines, and spinach,' some prefer to be homosexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, or prostitutes. The central value in this book, which is used in junior high school and high school, is that anything is acceptable so long as those who do it feel no guilt."

Some people could argue that the latter books are an attempt to avoid indoctrination. Schools can teach *about* controversial topics, religion, and moral viewpoints, but not *advocate* a particular stance. Such a position, though, stands in direct conflict with those who believe in moral absolutes, particularly when, as Ravitch says, "a curriculum directly challenges the most important personal values held by most parents."

One option is to avoid sex education altogether. Another is to help it find its proper place.

"Sex education belongs in the modern curriculum," Ravitch argues. "Every child should learn about sex, reproduction, and the human body. But such a curriculum should not serve as a platform for proselytizing for new advances in the sexual revolution . . . On matters of fact, the sex educator has an obligation to the findings of science. On the matters of value, the sex educator must realize that his own views are not necessarily superior to those of parents."

So what is the answer? What should be taught in public schools? And, more specifically, should we cover sex education, teach values, and discuss controversial topics?

Again, those are answers each community will have to decide for itself. But one thing is certain: Such topics of debate should not be avoided. To do so, Ravitch says, opens the school up to "extremist attacks" because "extremists feed on other people's fears and grievances."

To arrive at an answer to these and other questions, she says, school officials must face the controversy their very discussion will bring—and back up their decisions with sound reasoning. To do so, cogent and clear educational objectives and criteria must be set and followed.

"Historians, scientists, and other scholars have always submitted their work for public comment and review," Ravitch says. "In the same spirit, anything that is worth teaching is worth talking about, discussing, debating, and explaining. The best defense of intellectual freedom lies in the exercise of intellectual freedom, and the best support for the public schools is an informed public."

"It seems so obvious: of course we must transmit our values to the next generation. The real question is how did we ever get to the point where that became an illegitimate or neglected task? A task that teachers were afraid to take up, or textbook publishers were afraid to address in our textbooks? To answer that question, we have to think through who we are in this country, what we believe in, where we come from, and arrive at a much deeper understanding. This is not an easy issue, but we all know that we have to do it. There is a growing consensus in this country that unless we figure out what values are important and how to teach them, both our civic and ethical traditions are in deep trouble."

Bill Honig, California superintendent of public instruction, *Values, Pluralism, and Public Education*, 1987 conference

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VIEWPOINT

Common Beliefs and Values

Should public schools advance certain beliefs and values? If so, which ones, and how?

A 1983 report of the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Scope and Sequence notes that there are rights, freedoms, responsibilities, and beliefs that Americans, as a culture and people, share—and that these should be incorporated into the public school curriculum.

The common beliefs and values are noted below; suggestions for incorporating them into the K-12 curriculum appear in Appendix E.

- **Rights:** Individuals have the right to life, liberty, dignity, security, equality of opportunity, justice, privacy, and private ownership of property.
- **Freedoms:** Each individual has the freedom to worship and to participate in the political process, and to exercise the freedom of thought, conscience, assembly, inquiry, and expression.
- **Responsibilities:** Each individual has the responsibility to respect human life and the rights of others, to be tolerant and compassionate, to demonstrate self-control, to participate in the democratic process, to work for the common good, and to respect the property of others.
- **Beliefs:** Americans believe that societies need laws that are accepted by the majority of people; that dissenting minorities are protected; that government is elected by the people, works for the common good, guarantees civil liberties, and respects and protects individual rights and freedoms.

Source: "In Search of Scope and Sequence (Report of the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Scope and Sequence, adopted by Board of Directors, 1983)." Reprinted from *Social Education*, (Vol. 48, No. 4, April 1984, pp. 249-261).

"Schools should teach students how to think, not what to think. To study an idea is not necessarily to endorse an idea."

Connecticut State Department of Education, 1981 policy on academic freedom

VIEWPOINT

Beyond a Literal Understanding

In its statement on censorship, the International Reading Association "supports freedom of speech, thought, and inquiry" and believes "reading comprehension must go beyond literal understanding, to interpretation and evaluation of what is read."

To develop this "critical perspective," the IRA maintains that curricula should provide for the:

- **Freedom to choose** from a rich choice of classroom and library materials dealing objectively with many facets of a diverse society.
- **Freedom to discuss** issues identified by such reading.
- **Freedom to defend** collective and individual positions against challenges from groups and individuals with different points of view.

VIEWPOINT

Saying 'No' to Sex Education

In its latest annual survey of school censorship incidents, People For the American Way reports that sex education is a prime target of Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America.

The two groups, and other members of the religious right, have, according to the report, "concentrated their efforts on reshaping state-mandated sex education curricula. Their goal is to limit teaching about sexuality, particularly about contraception."[10]

According to Eric Buehrer, executive vice president of Citizens for Excellence in Education, there are certain "moral arenas" that adults should not surrender, and sex education is one of them. He said he's particularly concerned when schools teach about, and even distribute, contraceptive devices. Such practices, he says, "send a very, very mixed signal, and a wrong kind of signal, and a signal that a lot of parents, for good reason, don't want their kids to get."

Buehrer adds, in paraphrasing former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett, that "when you're teaching about contraceptives in a user-friendly approach, you're basically saying, 'We give up on you, here, take these pills, or use these condoms, and limit the damage you do to yourself.' "

For Schlafly, opposing sex education is not new. She does, however, find more reason to fight since the spread of AIDS. As she notes in the October 1987 issue of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report:* "Using AIDS as the lever, the advocates of mandated sex education are trying to force their values and courses on minor children in the public school classroom, regardless of how offensive this is to parents and children."[11]

In the November 1987 issue of her newsletter, she argues that because of the AIDS epidemic, children "should be taught to 'just say NO' to illegal drugs and premarital sex." Quoting Bennett's booklet, *AIDS and the Education of our Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers,* Schlafly writes that school materials should "emphasize standards of right and wrong" and "should not be value neutral." Students, she says, "should be taught to abstain from sexual activity until, as adults, they are ready to establish a mutually faithful marriage."[12]

Education professor Diane Ravitch, in a 1982 lecture before the Education Writers Association, noted that sex education is an area where the New Right has found an audience. Ravitch, who is in favor of sex education, said the best way to deal with it is "to open it up to public discussion and criticism. Just as we would not want public school children indoctrinated in right-wing or left-wing political ideologies, far-out ideologies of sexual liberation based on hostility to middle-class mores of marriage and family life should not be smuggled into the curriculum and then made immune from responsible criticism."

To do so, she said, invites trouble. And, she said, "the New Right has a measure of success when it hits upon an issue where there is a discontented public that is far larger than the New Right."

Leading the charge against sex education is Schlafly who, in *Child Abuse in the Classroom,* outlines the basis for her objections in a series of questions she proposes that parents should use to evaluate sex education teachings and practices. Among them are:[13]

- Does it teach or imply that "responsible" sex is any sex that does not result in having a baby?
- Does it omit all references to moral standards of right and wrong, teaching only animal-level sex? Does it try to eliminate all guilt for sin?
- Does it urge boys and girls to seek help from or consult only or primarily public agencies rather than their parents or religious advisers?
- Does it require instruction and discussion to take place in sex-integrated (coed) classes rather than separate classes for boys and girls?
- Does it omit mentioning chastity as a method (the only absolute method) of preventing teenage pregnancies and VD?
- Does it assume that all boys and girls are engaging in immoral sex, thereby encouraging them to accept promiscuous sexual acts as normal?
- Does it require boys and girls to engage in role-playing (pretending one is pregnant, pretending one has to admit having VD, pretending to use various types of contraceptives), thereby encouraging peer pressure to be exerted on the side of fornication rather than chastity?
- Does it fail to stress marriage as the most moral, most fulfilling, and/or most socially acceptable method of enjoying sexual activity?
- Does it present abortion as an acceptable method of birth control?
- Does it use materials and references from the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood?
- Does it present homosexual behavior as normal and acceptable?

"When it comes to the matter of selecting curricula for public school pupils, there seem to be two classes of people. There are those who believe that parents are the primary educators of their children and have the constitutional right to safeguard the child's religion, ethics, culture, and attitudes, as well as family privacy, and to reject materials that downgrade or interfere with any of the above. Then there are those—such as the NEA—who believe that the schools have the right to select and impose any curricula of their choosing, including experimental courses, films, textbooks, and other materials, and that parents have no right to interfere."

Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report,* October 1987

CURRICULUM: WHAT IT IS, WHO DECIDES

What is curriculum? Liken it to the equation:

(Interaction between instructional objectives, materials and activities)
\+ (The way the teacher uses them in the classroom)
= (Curriculum, a required series of study)

Such is the view of Mary Ann Lecos, assistant superintendent for curriculum in the Fairfax County, Va., public school system. "Ultimately," she said at the NSBA forum, curriculum "is what happens behind the classroom door."

But before the key player takes the stage, the stagehands have been busy: Curricular objectives have been debated, set, publicized, and, if necessary, defended. Curricular materials (including textbooks, workbooks, filmstrips, computer courseware, and supplementary reading materials) have been selected and purchased to advance those objectives.

Clearly, then, curriculum planning goes beyond the selection of materials.

"School board members do themselves a disservice as governors of public education, and do their students and teachers a disservice, if they approach the curriculum issues as if selection of textbooks is all there is to their involvement in curriculum development," Lecos says.

School board members, she adds, must view curriculum as "a strategic plan for learning in the school district" and approach curriculum development "in the same way you approach any kind of strategic planning. You have to figure out what your mission is, what your purpose is; you have to identify the forces internally and externally that are going to be affecting the achievement of your mission; and you have to figure out how to deal with them over a period of time as you develop action plans that you will put into effect using all of the resources in your school district."

Curricular decisions aren't—and shouldn't be—made in a vacuum. To be considered are the viewpoints of the forces who have an interest in what children learn—and that includes parents, community members, educators, and school board members. How those opinions are shaped into a consensus determines in good part how successful a curriculum plan will be—and how vulnerable it will be to attack.

"The U.S. Supreme Court has referred to the state's undoubted right to prescribe curriculum—but it . . . (is) not an unqualified right," Michael J. Woodruff, director of the Center for Law and Religious Freedom of the Christian Legal Society in Merrifield, Va., noted at the NSBA forum.

For example, he says:

- Teachers deliver the content "through the unique grid of their own personality, their own values, their own teaching styles." In the upper grades, he adds, the teacher's discretion for handling controversial subjects, based on the appropriateness to the grade level and subject matter, increases as well.
- Parents, as recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, have, in Woodruff's words, "the liberty to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control . . . The child is not the mere creature of the State. Those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations."

According to Woodruff, parents have four options to consider when confronted with textbooks or coursework they consider to be objectionable:

- **They can seek a religious exemption,** commonly called opting out. In other words, they can seek to be excused from using a particular material.
- **They can ask to use an alternative curriculum.** "This is simply asking that an exception be made for them and there are consequences, obviously, if students who are exempted miss material that can be part of a standardized test," Woodruff says. "There could be problems for the teacher in terms of education methods if the children are not able to participate in later discussions." But school officials, he adds, have "the opportunity to review the requests to accommodate the parents where there is no issue as to the parents' sincerity."
- **They can resort to litigation,** "which asks the court to act as censor—a role that the courts are very reluctant to accept." This parental option, Woodruff adds, "bypasses the consultative process, bypasses the deliberation—the careful, multi-interest group considerations that have" ideally been considered in textbook and curriculum decisions. Lawsuits, Woodruff continues, are expensive, time-consuming and people often "underestimate (their) psychological cost."

- **They can retreat,** "by leaving the public schools and placing children in private schools."

The last two options, taken to the extreme, threaten the very foundation of public education. As Woodruff notes, lawsuits "can harden attitudes and make people more adversarial and intractable."

The School Board's Role

To avoid conflict, school board members need to exercise their authority carefully and within the constraints of their power, which is not always an easy task when it comes to curriculum.

"One of the most important and correspondingly difficult duties of a local school board is its oversight of the curriculum," noted the NSBA in a friend of the court brief filed in *Virgil v. School Board of Columbia County.* "As representatives of the community, the board has a dual duty: first, to the public to assure an educated populace; and second, to the parents whose ideas may vary as to the material to which they want their children exposed."

According to Lecos, curriculum needs to be assessed, reviewed, developed, and revised—and it is in this last phase that most of the controversy erupts, especially among education professionals.

"I heard many times that this was an area where the board should keep 'hands off.' The board sets policy and then the administration (should do) everything else," Lecos says. "But I've never believed there was such a sharp division between policy and administration."

The school board's most active role in curriculum development, she says, should be in ensuring that there is an "objectives-based curriculum." She notes that school board members should:

- **Think globally** and realize that most learning is "holistic." Breaking learning down into "hundreds and hundreds of discreet steps for each grade level" is a "burden to teachers" and puts off the community.
- **Consider balance and emphasis;** scope and sequence. Ensure that learning objectives are appropriate to certain grade levels and "that you have a cohesive program of instruction and one that will ensure that all students have attended to the core curriculum."
- **Keep in mind curriculum alignment.** Ensure that the required series of studies reflects state and local learning objectives, including those that show up on mandated tests.
- **Periodically and systematically review curricular offerings,** "otherwise you are going to find yourself reviewing and revising under the force of reactionary groups in the communities or sometimes even (in response to) events that are beyond your control."

  Take, for example, the push for AIDS education. "Believe me," Lecos says, "this was not in any of our long-range plans for curriculum development. This is just one of the things you must react to when your community decides, 'This is an important addition to the instructional program.' "
- **Look for "windows of opportunity"** in setting up a schedule for curriculum review. These are periods such as when a new superintendent comes on board. In Fairfax County, curriculum is reviewed on a cycle that reflects the state's textbook adoption cycle.

  Also, "inside forces," such as failing test scores, a change in state requirements for graduation or a community interest in foreign languages might require a reassessment. If curriculum is reviewed periodically, accommodating these new shifts and requirements becomes more manageable, Lecos says.

Once an objectives-based curriculum is adopted, school board members can concentrate on selecting materials to advance those goals. Chief among the materials is the textbook.

But it is during "the articulation of objectives," Lecos says, that "the dialogue and the donnybrooks, if you are going to have them, should be taking place, rather than at the time you're involved in the textbook selection."

"The advice of staff, parents, and students should be sought and utilized by school boards in the process of selecting instructional materials."

NSBA, Article IV, Section 1.3, *Beliefs and Policies*

"Curriculum offerings should be broad enough to make available to all students an educational opportunity that takes into consideration their needs, ability, and cultural and socioeconomic background."

NSBA, Article IV, Section 1.1, *Beliefs and Policies*

"Undeniable tensions underlie the censorship controversy . . . There is a tension between a teacher's academic freedom and a community's right to prescribe an appropriate curriculum for its students; between a teacher's academic freedom and his responsibility not to indoctrinate his students; between the school board's right to set a curriculum and a parent's right to determine what is appropriate for his child . . . between a student's right to learn whatever he wants and the parent's right to shield his child from potentially harmful ideas."

Albert Shanker, president, American Federation of Teachers

VIEWPOINT

The 'Essentials of Education'

Consider the following in drafting an objectives-based curriculum. According to *The Essentials of Education: A Call for Dialog and Action*, a pamphlet published by the National Council of Teachers of English and based on a statement endorsed by leaders of 24 professional organizations, a student should be able to:

- Use language, to think, and to communicate effectively.
- Use mathematical knowledge and methods to solve problems.
- Reason logically.
- Use abstractions and symbols with power and ease.
- Apply and to understand scientific knowledge and methods.
- Make use of technology and to understand its limitations.
- Express oneself through the arts and to understand the artistic expressions of others.
- Understand other languages and cultures.
- Understand spatial relationships.
- Apply knowledge about health, nutrition, and physical activity.
- Acquire the capacity to meet unexpected challenges.
- Make informed value judgments.
- Recognize and use one's full learning potential.
- Prepare to go on learning for a lifetime.

VIEWPOINT

The School Board's 'Three B's'

One thing is certain: Developing curriculum, what Mary Ann Lecos calls "a strategic plan for learning," takes time, something school board members usually lack. It's a problem recognized by Lecos, who once served as a school board member and is now the assistant superintendent for curriculum in the Fairfax County, Va., school district.

"The first thing I would observe from my experience as a school board member . . . is that we spend almost no time on instructional issues," Lecos said at the NSBA forum. "Why is that? I don't know . . . We spend most of our time, as we used to say, on the three B's: the budgets, the bonds, the boundary changes."

With this in mind, Fairfax County began to budget time outside of regular board meetings to address curriculum and instructional issues. In following Fairfax's lead, Lecos says, school districts should "avoid the dog-and-pony shows or show-and-tell sessions about what's going on in the school."

"This is very important," she adds, because "you could spend all of your time seeing demonstrations of students' work or videotapes of computer labs without really getting into the heart of the instructional program."

"No single tradition in public education is more deeply rooted than local control over the operation of schools; local autonomy has long been thought essential both to the maintenance of community concern and support for public schools and to quality of the educational process . . . local control over the educational process affords citizens an opportunity to participate in decision making, permits the structuring of school programs to fit local needs, and encourages 'experimentation,' innovation, and a healthy competition for education excellence."

***Milliken v. Bradley*, 1974**

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Avoiding a One-View Rule

"Public schools represent a public trust. They exist to prepare our children to become partners in a society of self-governing citizens."

So reads a 1981 policy on academic freedom enacted by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The policy further notes that no single viewpoint should determine the student's "access to ideas" and opportunities for considering "the broad range of questions and experiences which constitute the proper preparation for a life of responsible citizenship."

To protect against a one-view determination, school officials should specify—and be aware of—the rights and responsibilities of those concerned with what students learn and are exposed to in public school classrooms and libraries.

In making those distinctions, the Connecticut policy notes that:

- **Teachers, school administrators, librarians, and school media specialists** "must be free to select instructional and research materials appropriate to the maturity level of their students," a freedom that is "subject to the reasonable restrictions mandated by law to school officials and administrators."
- **Local school officials** "must demonstrate substantial or legitimate public interest in order to justify censorship or other proposed restrictions upon teaching and learning."
- **Local boards of education** "cannot establish criteria for the selection of library books based solely on the personal, social, or political beliefs of school board members."
- **Students** "must be free to voice their opinions in the context of a free inquiry" provided there is "respect for their fellow students and school personnel." However, that does not give students the right to expression that "threatens to interfere substantially with the school's function." Also, students "must be mindful that their rights are neither absolute nor unlimited. Part of responsible citizenship is coming to accept the consequences of the freedoms to which one is entitled by law and tradition."
- **Parents** "have the right to affect their own children's education, but this right must be balanced against the right other parents' children have to a suitable range of educational experiences."

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Free Inquiry and Criticism

A policy on "the freedom to teach, to learn, and to express ideas in the public schools," adopted by the Minnesota Board of Education in 1985, spells out the do's and don'ts for public school personnel and outside groups in deciding what is taught and studied in public schools.

The policy notes that "public schools must promote an atmosphere of free inquiry and a view of subject matter reflecting a broad range of ideas." However, it adds, "criticism of educational resources and teaching methods and the advocacy of additional educational resources are also essential First Amendment rights of students, faculty, parents, and other members of the community."

In its policy, the state board recommends that each school district adopt a written policy that reflects the principles below; that specifies the criteria, the staff resources, and the process to be used to select and re-evaluate curricular and educational resources; and that is made available to the public.

According to the policy:

Public school personnel should:

- Select curriculum, teaching methods, resources, and materials appropriate to the educational objectives and the maturity and skill levels of the students based on educators' professional competence and according to established school board policies and procedures. However, teachers should not be allowed to indoctrinate students with their own personal views.
- Provide students access to a broad range of ideas and viewpoints.
- Encourage students to become decision makers, to exercise freedom of thought, and to make independent judgments through the examination and evaluation of relevant information, evidence, facts, and differing viewpoints.
- Support students' rights to present their ideas, even if some people might find the ideas objectionable.
- Discuss issues, including those viewed by some as controversial, since such discussion is essential to students' development of critical thinking and other skills which prepare them for full participation as citizens in a democratic society.

People or groups outside the public school should not be able to:

- Use the public schools to indoctrinate students with particular viewpoints or beliefs.
- Determine which viewpoints will be presented or avoided in public schools.
- Require the disciplining of professional staff for including issues or resources considered controversial in their classes if the reasons for including them are educationally sound.

Religion and the Curriculum

A newspaper cartoon shows a little boy giving an oral report to his classmates. From the bulletin board behind him, it's obvious that Thanksgiving Day is approaching.

"The pilgrims," says the boy, "came here seeking freedom of you know what. When they landed they gave thanks to you know who. And because of them we can worship each Sunday you know where."

Many public school teachers today know all too well the problem the little boy faced: how to address religion and its role in society and history without appearing to advocate a particular religion or religious viewpoint.

Ever since the Supreme Court ruled in the early 1960s that officially prescribed prayer from the King James Bible to open the school day was in violation of the First Amendment, educators and publishers, in an attempt to avoid controversy, either consciously or unconsciously have chosen to err on the side of safety.

As a result, there has been a censorship of omission: Textbooks gloss over religion, teachers avoid discussing it, and curriculum guides fail to find a place for it. Character, moral, and ethical education has lapsed.

And yet the controversy continues.

"Some people have suggested that the poor treatment of religion in the curriculum has given opponents of the public schools a handy weapon with which to attack the curriculum. Isn't that ironic?" says Charles C. Haynes, project director for Americans United Research Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonsectarian organization committed to research in the area of church-state relations.

"You could argue, rather glibly perhaps, that references to religion have been left out because we're afraid of attacks, we're afraid of people complaining, or of controversy," Haynes said at the NSBA forum. "And yet the very leaving out now has caused the attacks and the complaining and the controversy."

Haynes asks how educators can avoid a discussion of religion in the study of such things as the founding of America and the civil rights and peace movements. "The story of religious freedom in American is inadequately told in textbooks," he says. "After some mention of how we got it, it is almost completely neglected for the rest of the 200 years of American history."

He further notes that "in more than 20 nations worldwide, ethnic disputes are at the root of ongoing, violent confrontations. Obviously, unless students know about this and understand this, they can't understand the world and deal with it."

Haynes says he is "not particularly optimistic" about better textbook treatment of religion any time soon, although there has been some movement in that direction.

Laidlaw Educational Publishers, in a study conducted by the National Institute of Education, was criticized for portraying Joan of Arc as a feminist, rather than a religious figure, in a sixth-grade textbook. The study also cited a second-grade text that told the story of Thanksgiving without mentioning God or the Pilgrims' religious background.[14]

The company's chief executive officer said the firm intended to change its ways and portray a "realistic" view of the role of religion in history and contemporary life. "Religion has not been entirely left out of our textbooks and other publishers', but it has been soft-pedaled to the point of being ridiculous," company executive Herbert P. Adams was quoted as saying.[15]

In reaction, California schools chief Bill Honig, whose office has revised its standards for history and social studies curricula, said the company was "moving in the right direction. Ninety percent of parents want this for their kids. Kids are ethically illiterate. They will choose their own religion and ethical standards, but we can inform their choice. It's not just technical knowledge we must teach, but ethics, morality, and understanding."[16]

The portrayals of Joan of Arc and Thanksgiving are but two examples illustrative of how the public school curriculum has neglected religion. "We can quibble about how much it does, and what ways it does, but it does," Haynes says. "Religion has obviously played an important and central role in every human society, every human culture. Without some understanding of this role of religion, students are unprepared to confront the challenges of contemporary life."

Haynes is not alone in his beliefs. According to *Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers*, a pamphlet sponsored jointly by his group, the National School Boards Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Education Association, and 10 other organizations,[17] a growing number of people across the country believe it is important to teach about religion in the public schools—and that "includes consideration of the beliefs and practices of religions; the role of religion in history and contemporary soci-

ety; and religious themes in music, art, and literature."

The pamphlet notes that the "omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible."

The study of religion, the pamphlet continues, "is also important if students are to value religious liberty, the first freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Moreover, knowledge of the roles of religion in the past and present promotes cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace."

Haynes suggests that educators deal with religion in public school curricula for three reasons:

- **There is no alternative.** Avoiding the issue has resulted in an incomplete education for students.
- **The best defense is a good offense.** "If your schools do what they can do constitutionally, and what they should do educationally," he says, "you can respond to school critics from a position of strength."
- **It is the right thing to do.** "Why present a curriculum that is not the best it can be, and therefore leave oneself open to legitimate attack?" Haynes asks. "Failure to do so will produce more court cases, it will lessen support for public education in this country . . . (and it) will also increase political support for vouchers and other remedies."

VIEWPOINT

Americans on Religion in the Classroom

To "help assess the state of the union regarding religion and public life," the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, a private, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization concerned with the place of religion in American public life, commissioned a major nationwide opinion survey, which was conducted in December 1987.[18]

Among the topics covered were the place of religion in the classroom. The findings:[19]

- **In-school meetings: Seventy percent agree that "public schools should allow student religious groups to hold voluntary meetings in school classrooms, when classes are not in session." Twenty-four percent disagree; 6 percent don't know.**
- **School prayer: Over three-fourths of the public (77 percent) agree that "public schools should set aside a moment of silence each day for students to pray if they want to." Nineteen percent disagree; 4 percent don't know.**
- **Creationism: Sixty-nine percent hold that public schools should teach both "evolution and the Bible's account of the creation of life on Earth." Eleven percent say only evolution should be taught; 11 percent say only creationism should be taught.**
- **Values: Almost one-third (30 percent) agree that "the government should require that Judeo-Christian values be emphasized in public schools. Fifty-two percent disagree; 18 percent don't know.**

VIEWPOINT

Education vs. Indoctrination

The U.S. Supreme Court has indicated that it is within constitutional rights to teach *about* religion; it is religious *indoctrination* that should be avoided.

According to the pamphlet *Religion in the Public School Curriculum*, school officials should note the following in making that distinction:

- **The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.**
- **The school may strive for student *awareness* of religions, but should not press for student *acceptance* of any one religion.**
- **The school may sponsor *study* about religion, but may not sponsor the *practice* of religion.**
- **The school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views, but may not *impose* any particular view.**
- **The school may *educate* about all religions, but may not *promote* or *denigrate* any religion.**
- **The school may *inform* the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to *conform* him or her to any particular belief.[20]**

VIEWPOINT

Religion vs. Values

How does teaching about religion differ from teaching values?

According to the pamphlet *Religion in the Public School Curriculum*, "the former is objective, academic study; the latter involves the teaching of particular ethical viewpoints or standards of behavior. There are basic moral values that are recognized by the population at large (e.g., honesty, integrity, justice, compassion). These values can be taught in classes through discussion, by example, and by carrying out school policies. However, teachers may not invoke religious authority."

The pamphlet continues: "Public schools may teach about the various religious and nonreligious perspectives concerning the many complex moral issues confronting society, but such perspectives must be presented without adopting, sponsoring, or denigrating one view against another."

"Decades ago, in many communities, schools were attacked for promoting a de facto Protestantism to the detriment of other faiths. As school prayer, religious clubs, and other forms of religious expression were banned from schools, the pendulum swayed. Today, the schools are attacked for failing to deal with religion at all, with some even charging anti-religious bias. This discontent has led to challenges of the curriculum and textbooks in Alabama, Tennessee, and elsewhere."

***American Educator*, Fall 1988**

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Religious Holidays

Remember when "winter vacation" was called "Christmas vacation?" When "spring break" was called "Easter recess?"

The newer terms, by avoiding mention of the religious celebrations, are considered inoffensive to people who do not believe in what the holidays stand for.

But what about the school Christmas party? Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny? Displaying a menorah at Hanukkah?

Can students distribute religious Christmas cards on school grounds? Can school officials lease a school building to a local church that wants to put on its annual Christmas pageant? What about students who create religious artwork in their art classes?

Some of these questions are addressed in the booklet *Christmas in the Public Schools: Constitutional Ways to Observe Religious Holidays.* The booklet is intended "to inform people on the law and to stop unnecessary censorship of Christmas from the public schools."[21]

How should Christmas and other religious holidays be treated in the schools? According to a pamphlet sponsored jointly by 14 organizations—including the NSBA and the National Conference of Christians and Jews—the answer is "carefully."

"Religious holidays offer excellent opportunities to teach about religions in the elementary and secondary classroom," notes *Religion in the Public School Curriculum.* "Recognition of and information about such holidays should focus on the origin, history, and generally agreed-upon meaning of the observances. If the approach is objective, neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, it can foster among students understanding and mutual respect within and beyond the local community."

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Guidelines for Curriculum and Debate

To help put the study of religion back into the curriculum, a group of educators, scholars, and educational organizations, in cooperation with the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, are drafting a one-week course for primary and secondary schools to be published in 1990.

According to a promotional pamphlet, *Living With Our Deepest Differences: Religious Liberty in a Pluralistic Society,* the course is intended "to follow the broad outlines of the Williamsburg Charter, working exclusively within a framework or what is educationally sound and constitutionally permissible."

The charter, drafted by a committee representing America's leading faiths, was, according to the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, designed "to celebrate the genius of the First Amendment religious liberty clauses, to reaffirm freedom of conscience for people of all faiths or none, to work for a consensus on the place of religious liberty in public life, and to foster understanding of these issues."

More than 130 public figures—including Presidents Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, and former Chief Justice Warren E. Burger—have signed the "national compact" on how Americans should "view the place of religion in American life and how we should contend with each other's deepest differences in the public sphere." The charter was ratified on June 25, 1988, the 200th anniversary of Virginia's call for a federal bill of rights.

From the axiom that "rights are universal and responsibilities mutual," the charter "derives guidelines for conducting public debates involving religion in a manner that is democratic and civil." They are:[22]

- Those who claim the right to dissent should assume the responsibility to debate.
- Those who claim the right to criticize should assume the responsibility to comprehend.
- Those who claim the right to influence should accept the responsibility not to inflame.
- Those who claim the right to participate should accept the responsibility to persuade.

The curriculum editorial review board is chaired by Ernest Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and former U.S. commissioner of education. Others involved in the education project include Thomas A. Shannon, executive director of the National School Boards Association; Mary Futrell, president of the National Education Association; Bill Honig, California superintendent of public instruction; Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers; and Manya Ungar, president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

According to *Living With Our Deepest Differences,* the one-week course is to "focus on the place or religious liberty in society rather than addressing specific controversial issues." The goals are:

- To explain the history and significance of the First Amendment religious liberty clauses and their decisive contribution to individual and communal liberty and to American democracy.
- To examine the advantages and responsibilities of living in a modern pluralistic society and to demonstrate how practical dilemmas can be answered in terms of tolerance and mutual respect rather than bigotry and violence.
- To deepen each student's appreciation of the principles of religious liberty for peoples of all faiths or none, and to establish a strong civic commitment to the ground rules by which all citizens can contend robustly but civilly over religious differences in public life.

Curriculum materials are being written for three grade levels—fifth, eighth, and eleventh—and for school boards and parents. The curriculum, and its classroom materials, are to be tested in several school districts before its availability in time for the 1989-90 school year.

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Controlling Access to Facilities

It's not uncommon to allow outside groups to use school facilities during nonschool hours. But what if that group is the Ku Klux Klan?

The courts have held that once a school board allows any outside group to use a facility, an "open forum" has been created and all groups must be allowed the same access.

Without a policy in place, a school board can either allow or disallow access. With a policy in place, the board can control access by establishing conditions for the use of school facilities.

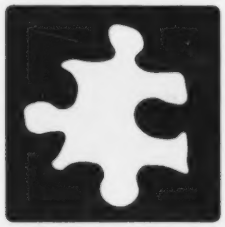
There is a caveat: Whatever conditions are established must be applied fairly to all groups. That means if the school board allows the Knights of Columbus to use a school gymnasium under certain conditions, it cannot deny access to the Knights of the KKK under those same conditions. The alternative, however, is to allow no access, which does little to foster essential community-school relationships.

The Georgia School Boards Association recommends that school board members consider the following in drafting a policy for the use of school buildings:[26]

- Will you permit the use of school facilities for individual, private, and commercial purposes?
- Must nonschool groups have insurance or post bonds?
- Will a fee schedule be adopted for groups other than school-related organizations?
- What will be the chain or command in approving/disapproving the use of school facilities?

In drafting regulations to implement the policy, the GSBA recommends that school boards consider the following:[27]

- How many days in advance must the request be made?
- What kinds of groups will have free use of buildings and which ones must pay a rental fee?
- Must a school employee be present?
- Applications and permits should specify day, hours, and place. Procedures (such as requiring changes to be resubmitted to the principal or superintendent) should be spelled out.



STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Putting Religion into the Curriculum

"Where does the study of religion belong in the curriculum?"

"Wherever it naturally arises," according to a pamphlet sponsored jointly by 14 organizations.

The pamphlet, *Religion in the Public School Curriculum*, notes that "many educators believe that integrating study about religion into existing courses is an educationally sound way to acquaint students with the role of religion in history and society."

It notes further that:

- "On the secondary level, the social studies, literature, and the arts offer many opportunities for the inclusion of information about religions—their ideas and themes."
- "On the elementary level, natural opportunities arise in discussions of the family and community life and in instruction about festivals and different cultures."
- "Religion also may be taught about in special courses or units. Some secondary schools, for example, offer such courses as world religions, the Bible as literature, and the religious literature of the West and of the East."

At the NSBA forum, Charles C. Haynes, project director for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, suggested the following for school officials who want to incorporate religion into the curriculum:

- **Be creative.** Go beyond guidelines, position statements, and committee reports.
- **Trust the teachers and provide them with in-service training.** "I can think of no other group of people that I would trust more to handle this than the people who are working in public education. The people I talk to and work with are very sensitive to these issues, want to do a good job, want to be balanced."
- **Demand better textbook treatment** and avoid those that resort to "religion mentioning." Accept no less from publishers.
- **Don't expect the textbook to do it alone.** Search for and demand improved supplementary materials.
- **Work with the schools of education.** If those who are training to become teachers "are not exposed to religious issues, it's very difficult to ask (them) to deal sensitively and fairly with these issues when they get in the classroom."
- **Support those out on the limb.** "So many teachers have said to me, 'I'm afraid to talk about religion in American history, or whatever, because my principal will object,' or 'the parents will come in,' and so forth . . . We should help the teacher to know that there is support if you are trying to do a good job in this area, and we're behind you, just keep trying to do a good job."

Section Three: The Mission of Public Education

NOTES

1. Robert C. Small Jr., "Censorship and English: Some Things We Don't Seem to Think About Very Often (But Should)," *Dealing with Censorship*, ed. James E. Davis (National Council of Teachers of English, 1979), p. 57.
2. Ibid., p. 54.
3. Ibid., p. 55.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
6. Ibid., p. 56.
7. Onalee McGraw, "Censorship and the Aims of Education: Some Unanswered Questions," *Virginia English Bulletin: Censorship or Selection?* (Virginia Association of Teachers of English, Spring 1986), p. 66.
8. Ibid., p. 69.
9. Ibid., p. 67.
10. People For the American Way, *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn, 1987-88 Report*, p. 5.
11. The Eagle Trust Fund, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* (October 1987), p. 4.
12. The Eagle Trust Fund, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* (November 1987), p. 2.
13. Phyllis Schlafly, ed., *Child Abuse in the Classroom* (Illinois: Pere Marquette Press, 1984), pp. 438-439.
14. Joan Connell, "Putting God back in books," *San Jose Mercury News*, Feb. 28, 1987.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. *Religion in the Public School Curriculum* is sponsored jointly by the American Academy of Religion, American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, Americans United Research Foundation, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Christian Legal Society, National Association of Evangelicals, National Conference of Christians and Jews, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., National Council on Religion and Public Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Education Association, and National School Boards Association.
18. The survey was conducted by the Center for Communication Dynamics of Washington, D.C. "with a random, nationwide canvass of 3,017 Americans, including special samples of young people and leadership groups. A total of 1,889 adults were interviewed at random by telephone for the cross-sectional sample. Additional interviews were conducted with more than 300 teenagers and with seven leadership groups, including business executives, college professors, government leaders, newspaper editors and radio/TV news directors, Protestant ministers, Roman Catholic priests, and rabbis."
19. The Williamsburg Charter Foundation, *The Williamsburg Charter Survey on Religion and Public Life* (Feb. 3, 1988), p. 16.
20. This part of the answer is "based on guidelines originally published by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright State University."
21. Jordan Lorence, *Christmas in the Public Schools: Constitutional Ways to Observe Religious Holidays* (Concerned Women for America, 1987), p. 5.
22. *The Williamsburg Charter*, pp. 20-22.
23. Georgia School Boards Association, Inc., *Bulletin* (October/November 1982), p. 5.
24. Ibid.

Section Four: TEXTBOOKS

How Textbook Censorship Strikes and Why

A textbook is more than just a cover and its contents.

It's computer software, a novel, a workbook, a teacher's manual, a filmstrip, an audiocassette tape, a videotape, a collection of resource materials, an activities kit, or some combination of the above.

In short, the "textbook program" is anything and everything that is used to guide students along the course of curriculum objectives. And it is a frequent target of attack.

Censorship affects the textbook program in many ways.

The most obvious form is perpetrated by those people who see society's ill fortunes and misguided ways reflected in the materials their children read and study. Those segments of society that are "hurting," that are uncomfortable with changing mores and values, that see a breakdown in traditional roles, that see a crumbling of morality in a world fraught with temptation, that find it hard to raise their children according to deeply held beliefs of right and wrong in a world they view as increasingly secular, will often—and sometimes understandably—lash out.

And what proves to be an easier target than the school, the most accessible of society's institutions? The challengers will seek the tangible, something that can be pointed to, highlighted, underlined, held, shown, ripped, crossed out, torn out, torn apart, and burned. And what is more tangible than the "textbook," in whatever form it takes?

But textbook censorship also strikes in the dark. Those who demand that textbook programs cover this and that, include this and that, portray this and that, and refer to this and that—all within the confines of a set number of pages—in effect sometimes demand a textbook that censors meaningful discourse and achieves superficiality: the quantity-versus-quality "checklist mentality" that comes with the mandated treatment of too many topics and facts.

Those who demand that textbook programs avoid—in effect, censor—meaningful treatment of anything and everything that could be construed to be controversial, such as the treatment of religion, slavery, war, or poverty in America's history, hope to achieve smooth sailing in the days of schooling ahead. They might avoid rocking the boat, but they do so at the risk of not revealing and discussing important historical and cultural developments.

And those who fail to adequately assess and review textbook programs for factual accuracy, appropriateness to grade level, and crisp writing style, in effect ensure that students will spend a majority of their time learning from books that are misleading, meaningless, and muddled.

These and other forms of textbook censorship—under the guise of selecting, directing, and promoting a course of study and pedagogical technique—take a lasting toll on education, for, in the estimation of many, the textbook has transcended its role as a curriculum tool and has virtually become the curriculum itself.

"Today, the textbook has become the de facto curriculum in many schools," writes Connie Muther in *The American School Board Journal.* To support that conclusion, Muther, director of an education consulting group in Manchester, Conn., cites two studies of reading instruction. One found "students spend between 30 and 70 percent of instructional time working on the textbook program's workbooks and dittos" and a similar study that found that "95 percent of all classroom decisions about the reading program were structured around the textbook."[1]

"The textbook, in other words, has more influence on what happens in the classroom than any other factor except the classroom teacher," Muther says. "And that means the selection of textbooks is by far the most important consumer decision your school board makes."[2]

Other people, including Thomas E. Anderson Jr. of the Texas Education Agency, argue that the textbook is "not the total curriculum," but rather "an embodiment of a curriculum."

But, he added at the NSBA forum, "regardless of whether we would like to accept it or not, it is the major tool that the teachers use. It is something that the general public can look at . . . and either agree or disagree with. And the adoption of textbooks, even though it's an economic matter . . . is also a political matter."

Take, for example, Texas. According to the 1986 report *Liberty and Learning in the Schools,* at one time the state required that all textbooks "that treat the theory of evolution shall identify it as only one of several explanations of the origins of mankind and avoid limiting young people in their search for the meaning of their human existence"; further, that

each textbook in which evolution is treated substantively "must carry a statement on the introductory page that any material included in the book is clearly presented as theory rather than fact."[3]

As noted in the report, the "Texas State Board of Education is one of the largest textbook purchasers in the country, and publishers tailored their textbooks to satisfy the board's rule."[4]

The report adds that the Texas rule, although repealed by the state board of education in 1984, "called into serious question one of the central concepts of science, and did so in response to views advanced by some citizens of Texas that biblical creationism offers a credible scientific explanation for the beginning of life."[5]

In discussing the issue further, the report notes that "the Texas experience suggests that changes in textbooks that contradict longstanding tenets of inquiry and understanding in a particular field of knowledge . . . or that are meant to advance, or have the effect of advancing, a religious belief, can seriously encroach upon freedom in the schools. Most alterations in textbooks urged upon publishers by citizens do not reach this level of concern, however."[6]

But, adds the report, "this is not to imply that textbook selection is no more than a contest of political strength, subject to shifting sentiments and ideologies among the citizenry. It may sometimes be primarily this, with the ironic result that broadening the political process to accommodate diverse interests can narrow the range of acceptable textbook content."[7]

Other issues come to play in the determination of textbook content. At the NSBA forum, Roger Rogalin, who spoke as a representative of the Association of American Publishers, noted that:

- **Textbooks are produced for a national environment,** although "many states want us to publish books just for that particular state," which is not economically feasible.
- **A lot of money is at stake,** especially in producing a book that will be accepted by California and Texas, the leading purchasers of textbooks. They are among 22 states that adopt textbooks for use statewide—and they make their purchases in one year. In contrast, the "open territory" states, in which individual counties, school districts, or schools make their purchases, have "no pattern, there is no special year that one particular program is up (for review), and so the influence is diluted and you don't have textbook publishers rambling as much for those dollars."
- **Teachers and school board members have consumer instincts.** "They like things in pretty packages, they like things that are delivered in a way that makes them feel better about it, so publishers spend a lot of money on packaging," which has "no pedagogical value at all." It's "strictly marketing."
- **The industry is beleaguered:** It's becoming more competitive as acquisitions and mergers have left their mark. "We're down to just about seven big companies . . . (and) there used to be 20 or so." The result: "Your selections are getting less and less, the number of companies, the number of choices that you have, are getting less and less." Part of the reason is the expense of marketing. "Six years ago, marketing cost about 20 cents on every dollar that you sold. Today it's 25 cents. That takes it right out of the profit and makes things a little more difficult for small- to middle-sized companies."

Textbook content is also affected by the pressures from various groups concerning what should or should not be in the textbooks. For example, a women's group might lobby against the portrayal of females in homemaking roles, a religious group might lobby against the portrayal of non-traditional family lifestyles, and a civil rights group might lobby against the word "nigger" in any readings. Consequently, women's roles in the home are downplayed, no mention is made of single-parent families, or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* gets "cleaned up" in a literature anthology.

"The pressure (from special interest groups) doesn't come directly to publishers," Rogalin says. "They'll pressure the state of Texas, the state of California, the adopting units. Then that pressure is

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"Textbooks, for better or worse, dominate what students learn. They set the curriculum, and often the facts learned, in most subjects. For many students, textbooks are their first and sometimes only early exposure to books and to reading. The public regards textbooks as authoritative, accurate, and necessary. And teachers rely on them to organize lessons and structure subject matter. But the current system of textbook adoption has filled our schools with Trojan horses—glossily covered blocks of paper whose words emerge to deaden the minds of our nation's youth, and make them enemies of learning."

A. Graham Down, executive director, Council for Basic Education, in the preface to *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco*

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translated back to the publishers as to what types of materials they can and cannot utilize in those particular states. So what we had tried to do in the past, and what we continue to do, is accommodate our customer."

"I'll agree that we overreacted as an industry," he adds. "Anything related to any of those controversial issues we tended to back down. Avoid the word evolution, as one publisher did six or seven years ago. That was an overreaction and it was an overreaction in response to a perception of the market."

"Textbooks give the official, state-approved version of reality, and they are written expressly for use in the classrooms. Therefore it is neither strange nor alarming that decisions about which textbooks to use and what should be in them are political as well as pedagogical."

Joseph Nocera, *The New Republic*, Sept. 13, 1982

WHY TEXTBOOKS ARE THE WAY THEY ARE

The textbooks that 2.3 million teachers, 40,000 librarians, and 40.3 million students find in the nation's nearly 85,000 public schools are usually selected—or at least the choices are narrowed down—at the department, school, district, or state level.

According to the 1986 report *Liberty and Learning in the Schools*, "in 22 of the 50 states textbook adoption is statewide, but there is no uniformity in state practices. In several states, approved books are simply lists of recommended titles for local selection; some states mandate only the use of particular elementary school textbooks; and still others identify the textbooks to be used at all levels. Sales of elementary and secondary school textbooks in 1982 amounted to $1.051 billion. In the same year, the public schools spent $1.3 billion of the $9.9 billion paid by consumers for books."[8]

Textbooks, no doubt, are big business.

Yet, despite the enormous investment, the red flag is up: School officials aren't getting the kind of learning materials they need.

So claims Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, a senior associate at the Council for Basic Education and author of *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco* (The Council for Basic Education: 1988). At the NSBA forum, she said today's textbooks, across the board, are "marred by two pervasive problems: The writing is bad (and) there are too many topics treated too trivially." It's the situation that former

". . . any book on the (usually uncrowded) shelves of a school library, even if no one is obliged to read it, in some sense carries the imprimatur of the state on it. Given that, it's not surprising that parents—not to mention local school boards—want to have some voice in which books are placed on those shelves."

Joseph Nocera, *The New Republic*, Sept. 13, 1982

U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell was referring to when he coined the phrase, the "dumbing down" of textbooks.

Why are these problems pervasive? "You get exactly what you look for," Tyson-Bernstein says. And that "you," she adds, includes local and state school board members; state legislators; private contractors hired to assess materials; and district superintendents, assessment personnel, curriculum directors, administrators who manage textbook adoption, and professional and lay people who serve on textbook adoption committees.

"I think it's safe to say that very few, if any, school districts examine books for the quality of writing, or for the overall coherence of the book, or for the depth of treatment," Tyson-Bernstein adds. "In fact, most adoption committees don't read the book . . . Many of the sample copies that publishers provide to adoption committees come back with their cellophane wrappers intact. It is unusual, according to the publishers I've talked to, for adoption committees to read more than three contiguous pages in any book."

Consequently, Tyson-Bernstein says, "whatever ideological message you want students to receive—the value of the work ethic, the danger of acid rain, the importance of evolution, your particular slant on the proper sex role—these messages are not likely to be learned if they are written in prose that is so compressed and so dense that students don't get the meaning. Or prose so vapid and evasive that the students won't read the book in the first place. So, underlying the censorhip issue, there is a fundamental issue about whether the book can be read."

Another major problem is the search for "curricula congruence," which "sounds like the most wonderful idea in town; the idea that you should look for a book that supports your curriculum sounds utterly reasonable." But, Tyson-Bernstein adds, we do not live in a country that promulgates a national curriculum.

"We live in a country with hundreds of ministries of education, all promulgating their own unique curriculum," she says. "We have a melange of contradictory and incompatible curricula mandates coming

from the large adoption states, which are the most influential on the textbook publishers, and also from small- and medium-sized districts and non-adoption states, which also influence the textbooks."

As a result, Tyson-Bernstein says, "when so many states and localities demand curricular congruence, and when publishers design books that satisfy as many jurisdictions as possible, the idea of curriculum congruence becomes almost laughable. When a publisher must stuff into those textbooks all of the topics, skills, terms, events, episodes, messages, and processes—many of them mutually contradictory—required by the major adoption state, the book reads like Cliffs Notes or teletext. The mass of critical information that a beginner would need to have in order to understand something just isn't there, because it has been edited down to accommodate other demands within the fairly fixed confines of a hardcover book."

A third major problem is marketing: the selling of the textbook. On the one hand are publishers who want a return on their investment—a profitable return. On the other hand are educators and school officials with consumer—rather than instructional—interests. The combination, unchecked, often results in textbooks that are below par.

So argues Connie Muther, a longtime observer of the textbook field, in a 1986 article. She notes that, "according to estimates by a number of textbook publishers, anywhere from 30 to 70 percent of textbook selection decisions these days are influenced by the best deal the school system can find." And, she adds, "choosing texts on the basis of the best deal alone might well mean your schools—and students—aren't getting the kind of learning materials you want them to have."[9]

In her article, Muther discusses the components of the "typical deal" and various other marketing ploys. They include:[10]

- **Giveaways.** In the "typical deal," making the "right deal" pays off. The publisher provides, free of charge, many or all of the supplementary materials, whether they be workbooks, ditto masters, tests, charts, games, word cards, computer programs, teacher manuals, resource books, or even microscopes. A teacher's resource book can be an elaborate, three-ring binder that includes such things as glossy charts, posters, games, and hundreds of masters that can be used to reproduce letters to parents, homework sheets, drills for enrichment and review, student activities, and tests.

  "Today, these giveaways are commonplace," Muther says. "In fact, many publishers and sales agents say they no longer can compete in the textbook market unless they offer deals—and when price is a deciding factor in a school system's textbook selection, bigger and better deals must be negotiated."
- **The "legal" and "illegal" pilot.** In the legal pilot, certain classroom teachers are given free textbook materials. If they like them, the program is purchased for the entire school system. If they don't like it, there are no strings attached. In the illegal pilot, the publisher provides the program free of charge for several school buildings—provided it is purchased for the remaining schools. Another version is the "50/50 split," in which the school system pays for half the program—and the other half is provided free. In some instances, the school system will buy a textbook program for science, and the textbook program for health is thrown in for free.
- **The "unadvertised special."** The publisher provides an entire textbook program for free—but the school system must agree to buy several other programs from the same publisher.

If everybody's getting such a good deal, though, who pays? The answer is logical: the system that doesn't get the good deal. And that often is the system that has the least purchasing power.

"Most deals are offered to the largest (and thus, biggest spending) school systems in a state, leaving smaller systems to pay the full price," Muther says. "The practice is so widespread that several adoption states have adopted policies to reduce such dealing—or, at least, to make deals more fair to all school systems."[11]

But even the big spenders are worried. "We're getting, what we call in Texas, so many 'freebies' that the textbook doesn't carry its own weight," Thomas E. Anderson Jr. of the Texas Education Agency said at the NSBA forum. "What I worry about is that, in some instances, the content is not what sells the textbook, but . . . all the kind of adjunct material that may be free to the district, but is ultimately built into the price of the textbook."

"There is overwhelming evidence that formula-driven prose is bad for children and bad for education. There is also evidence that writers with a record of successful writing for young audiences often refuse to work for textbook publishers because they cannot tolerate the absurd restrictions that readability formulas impose on them."

Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, author, *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco*, 1988

VIEWPOINT

Textbook Pressures

According to Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, a senior associate at the Council for Basic Education and author of *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco*, several outside factors affect textbook quality and content.

At the NSBA forum, she said school board members should be aware of these pressures—and determine whether their school systems are falling prey to them. If so, it might be time to consider policy and procedural changes.

The factors include:

- **The pressure to engineer rises in student test scores.** Educators who feel the pressure, Tyson-Bernstein says, "are more intently looking for textbooks that match the contents of their testing programs, which, of course, differ from place to place." She adds: "Since standardized tests are almost entirely multiple-choice, short-answer tests, the kind of material they check up on when examining the book is the kind of low-level knowledge that can be accommodated on a multiple-choice form."
- **A quick-look, quick-see approach.** In their quest to achieve curriculum or standardized test congruence, textbook evaluators frequently focus on "the things that can be quickly checked in a very brief overview of the book"—the index, the glossary, the headlines, the captions. "The result is that the publishers orient themselves toward these labels; (they) manipulate the labels and the text remains pretty much the same," Tyson-Bernstein says. The publishers, she adds, "aren't really held accountable for how the text reads because nobody reads it. Most everything that makes a book worthwhile—adjectives, verbs, bright vignettes, vivid examples and counter-examples—have been edited out in order to include the material required by curriculum and assessment personnel in the nation's school systems."
- **Meaningless selection criteria,** such as the recency of the publication date, which, "according to studies of textbook adoption checklists in 70 states and local jurisdictions," is "the most commonly assessed feature," Tyson-Bernstein says. But, she adds, it can be a meaningless criterion and one that "forces publishers to put out new editions about every 18 months."

  In reality, though, the textbooks that school officials buy are written in six weeks or two months, she says, and "legally, a publisher only has to change about 10 pages in the whole book in order to qualify for a fresh date."

  Thus, she says, a recent publication date "absolutely does not mean that the material is up to date. What gets changed are the pictures, headlines, and things of that kind. The pedagogical buzzwords change from the old ones to the new ones, but the factual errors, the anachronisms, tend not to get corrected."
- **Quest for convenience.** "Teachers look for textbooks that make teaching easier, that cut down on preparation time," Tyson-Bernstein says. They ask such things as: "Are there loose-leaf teacher guides so you can take the lesson home with you at night and not have to carry the book home? Are there ready-made lesson plans so that you don't have to do any work in the evening? Are there workbooks that keep some of the kids busy when you're working with other kids? Are there pre-made activity sheets and test packs? Do the suggested activities and the questions mirror the style of the state minimum competency testing program?"

  "More than anything else," she adds, "teachers look for textbooks that are as similar as possible to the ones that they are already using. A radically new approach, a different set of topics, or an unfamiliar set of literary selections means that teachers have to change their lecture notes and develop a whole new set of extra materials and reading lists."
- **The "head count."** Assessors look at a textbook's pictures, count how many times, and in what ways, women and minorities are portrayed, and make a judgment as to whether race and gender fairness have been accomplished—regardless of what directions the book's text takes.
- **More pictures, more graphics, and attempts to appease special interests.** "Curriculum directors and people who are into the technocratic side of education have demanded more and more critical thinking skills and more and more of this educational formalism embedded in the text, which takes up more space," Tyson-Bernstein says. "Lobbies and special interest groups have demanded more information about this and that. Academics representing schools of thought have demanded that their specialties be included." The result, she adds, "is a thin stream of text winding around jazzy graphics and boxes."

  The "essential point here," Tyson-Bernstein says, "is that there are many interest groups

within the adult educational community, each looking out for its own particular interest, each using quite superficial methods for determining whether its interests have been satisfied by publishers. Otherwise good books get rejected because of head counts, typographical features, or fallacious labels. Even where teachers know better, they are increasingly apt to go against their own better judgment about textbooks because they have become increasingly frightened about student performance on standardized tests."

- **Mandated requirements to cover so many topics.** "You cannot write intelligently about a big subject if you've only got a page," Tyson-Bernstein says. Try it. Try writing about photosynthesis in one page of text minus the space for a couple of pictures. It can't be done. You can't write well when you're writing under those kind of constraints."
- **Overspecification.** Certain southern states have moved toward specifying curriculum and test-related content in such detail that books are driven into "incomprehension" because "publishers feel they must comply with what those very test-minded, matchup-minded states want," Tyson-Bernstein says. "They're issuing long lists of specifications, and they differ from one of those southern states to another."
- **Readability formulas,** which, according to Tyson-Bernstein, were developed about 60 years ago to help educators pick a book of the right level of difficulty for a child's grade level and reading ability.

  "It's done very mechanically by counting syllables in words and words in sentences and, in some formulas, you add points to the score if you use words that are deemed to be unfamiliar on the formula-maker's official word list," she says. "It is quite blind to meaning and style."

  For example, an elementary school text might include several sentences like "Oh, oh, oh," to achieve a better "readability score."

  For the same reason, the sentence, "John didn't buy Mary a birthday present because he didn't have any money," would be chopped in half to: "John didn't buy Mary a birthday present. John didn't have any money," which doesn't mean exactly the same thing.

  Examples like this, she adds, show how the readability formula has come to cause what it was designed to protect against: The textbooks become harder, not easier, to comprehend.

"Authors and editors do not willingly chop and flatten sentences, nor do they thoughtlessly mangle storylines. The source of the writing problem is not in the publishing house, but in the public agency. Legislators, educational policymakers, and administrative regulators have unintentionally drained the life out of children's textbooks."

Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, author, *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco*

GETTING BETTER TEXTBOOKS

Some of those concerned with the textbook industry see reason to hope.

At the NSBA forum, Roger Rogalin, who spoke as a representative of the Association of American Publishers and is senior vice president of development at D.C. Heath and Co., believes that some recent textbooks, and those that will be published over the next five years, "will have less concern for the special interest groups and more concern for literature and for a point of view in the books."

"The reason for that is not because someone suddenly became altruistic," he says. "The reason for that is the state of California, the state of Texas, North Carolina, and New York State are asking for it. They want more 'umph' in the books. The editors like that and the authors like that."

But, like it or not, some textbook observers still believe textbooks will not improve significantly in the near future. Nevertheless, most agree on one thing: Without adequate policies—without adequate safeguards to control the type of demand that will drive the supply—textbook quality will not improve.

"It's critically important for you (school board members) to understand the relationship between your textbook adoption policies and procedures and the condition of today's textbooks," textbook expert Harriet Tyson-Bernstein said at the NSBA forum. "If there is any generalization that I'm willing to make about this very complicated area of textbooks, it is that this is a policy problem; that almost all of the problems with textbooks that have been documented by researchers are almost exclusively attributable to the policies and procedures you preside over, however unknowingly and innocently."

"So," she adds, "the textbook problem is a policy problem, and that's the bad news. The good news is that you could get much better textbooks by changing your policy structure and your textbook adoption procedures."

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Toward A Better Textbook

How can school officials work toward improving textbooks?

At the NSBA forum, Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, a senior associate at the Council for Basic Education; Roger Rogalin, a speaker on behalf of the Association of American Publishers; and Thomas E. Anderson Jr. of the Texas Education Agency offered the following suggestions. Also included are suggestions made by Connie Muther, an education consultant, in her 1986 *American School Board Journal* article.[12]

- *Rogalin:* **Teachers should be closely involved—and trained.** Included in that training should be a discussion of censorship concerns and how to deal with them. They should also be trained better in pedagogy and content so they can more appropriately choose textbooks. "They'll pick the right material if they're trained properly and they're the ones who have to use it."
- *Rogalin:* **Involve as many factions as possible** in the selection process, including publishers. "The way you get the textbooks you want is to influence development . . . (If publishers) are involved early on in that three- or four-year process of developing a program, they'll be happy to give school systems or states the programs that they want."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Analyze books for quality of writing, depth of treatment, and overall coherence.** "My rule of thumb is, 'If I don't understand it, probably the kid won't.' " The books students read "must motivate them; they cannot be a deadly parade of facts and terms to satisfy a state agency or a central office functionary."
- *Anderson:* **Allow for a balancing of viewpoints.** At one time, Texas permitted only negative comments about a textbook to be aired at adoption hearings. Today, speakers in favor of the textbook are also allowed to submit testimony. As a result, Anderson says, "we're starting to see a better quality textbook . . . because we are having a balancing of the political process, of the testimony before the board, and the board is not near as responsive to some of the extremes as they were in the past."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Detach textbook adoption policies from the curriculum and testing program.** "Put another way, state and local policy-makers must cease the practice of trying to control textbook content in advance by issuing long, detailed specifications or by insisting on a match, trivially determined, to their particular curriculum."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Abandon the use of readability formulas** as an adopting criterion. "Fortunately, it appears that seasoned teachers exercising subjective judgment . . . could probably do better at picking books for kids than a readability formula. Teachers need to be empowered to use their own sense in picking books that are appropriate to children's reading levels."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Stop demanding a recent publication date.** It is not a way to ensure up-to-date material because "legally, a publisher only has to change about 10 pages in the whole book in order to qualify for a fresh date."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Ask content scholars from local universities to sit on selection committees.** Have them check for factual accuracy and conceptual coherence.
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Select textbook adoption committee members carefully.** At the very least, the majority of the members should be selected based on their knowledge, as opposed to the present process of selecting them according to role, geography, or organizational representation. "You would not subject your personnel hiring system to political patronage. And there is no sound reason why textbook selectors should be selected on political grounds."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Include special interest groups.** "There is nothing wrong with asking the representatives of special interest groups to participate, and they should participate" in the textbook adoption process. "But they should not be allowed to veto an otherwise good book because of a single picture or sentence that offends them."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Provide training for adoption committees.** "Lay members of adoption committees, just like the professional members, should be encouraged to consider the book's power to engage students with important ideas and vital knowledge."
- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Name to selection committees people who write to mass audiences for a living.** "I've done a lot of workshops on judging the quality of writing and I find that most people are terrified of the idea, or they're in a generation where they've been brought up to believe that it's all subjective; that it's just

one person's opinion against another's; that there are no standards for the quality of writing."

- *Tyson-Bernstein:* **Redesign selection procedures** so negative practices of adoption states are not reinforced.
- *Muther:* **Establish—and enforce—a textbook selection policy that says price and free materials will not be factors** in the textbook adoption process. Notify publishers of such a policy and automatically exclude those who are not in compliance.
- *Muther:* **Use sealed bids.** Choose the best two or three programs and then accept sealed bids. Open those bids only after the selection committee has made its final choice. That way, "if your final decision must be based on price, at least you have ensured that all the final candidates were chosen for educational quality."
- *Muther:* **Provide resources.** "Because textbook selection is such a complicated matter, your selection committee will need help reviewing research in the subject matter under study, as well as in reaching consensus on needs and goals and determining the extent to which these needs and goals are met by various texts."
- *Muther:* **Consider student and teacher needs.** The selection committee should identify, define, and describe those needs and then place them in rank order. Only then should the committee, using this "list of what (it) expects the new textbook program to accomplish," begin to evaluate materials.
- *Muther:* **Give evaluators time—and incentive—to do the job right.** Teachers, for example, could be paid a stipend to do the work over the summer vacation.
- *Muther:* **Require evidence.** "Direct your textbook selection committee to support its recommendations with proof that a specific program does, indeed, meet the goals and needs the committee has identified."

STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Spotting Biases

One thing textbook evaluators should look for: biases. In a 1966 study of textbooks by the American Historical Association, author Ray Billington identified the types of biases most frequently found among authors of history textbooks.

Dan Fleming, a professor at Virginia Tech, recounted those biases in an article published by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English. He notes that the biases, adapted below from his text, could apply to texts in other subject areas as well. Found were:[13]

- **The bias of inertia,** the failure of textbook authors to keep abreast of current scholarship. Result: Outworn legends or half-truths may emerge.
- **Unconscious falsification,** when writers are unable to divorce themselves from the milieus in which they've been reared. This form is particularly influenced by nationalism, where unwittingly glorifying one's own nation while degrading others' is easy to do.
- **Bias by omission,** the selection of facts to present an event. The smaller the space allowed, the greater the chance of ommission. Common practice: Allotting space to favorable events and ignoring those unfavorable to one's nation.
- **Bias in language,** the easiest form to recognize and correct. General rule: Be wary of statements that encompass "all" people. Note the use of the phrases "generally happy" and "cheerful manner" in the excerpt below (taken from a textbook that had been used in Virginia):

  "Life among the Negroes of Virginia in slavery times was *generally happy.* The Negroes went about in a *cheerful manner* making a living for themselves and for those for whom they worked."
- **Bias by cumulative implication,** which refers to the total tone of a text. If, throughout the text, one segment of society is inaccurately portrayed—such as the romantic view of slavery presented in the Virginia textbooks of the 1950s—the accumulated total becomes one of a major distortion.

STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Evaluating Textbooks

What makes a good textbook?

Harriet Tyson-Bernstein's definition, broken down into its components, is a useful guide for educators seeking to demand, select, and, if necessary, to defend the use of better textbooks.

"My definition," she said at the NSBA forum, "presumes that the book is to be read—and to be read enjoyably. (It) presumes that fewer topics, treated in more depth, are better than hundreds of topics that are treated trivially. (It) presumes that the quality of writing makes an enormous difference. Most of all, my definition assumes that a textbook ought to be an independent way to learn."

How do today's textbooks shape up? Not very well, Tyson-Bernstein says. Ideally, she says:

- The very first textbook given to young children in school would be so delightful that they would want to read more books. They would not only be thrilled by their growing ability to crack the code, but they would also be ushered into the riches of our culture.
- The skills taught in reading books would be closely related to, and not divorced from, the content of the stories.
- Mathematics books for young children should give them confidence in their ability to do math, help them think mathematically, and let them practice their skills on problems that are worth solving.
- All books for elementary-age children would contain information that is important to adults, as well as to children. Parents, as well as students, would enjoy reading the book.
- Books for older children would have a theme, or a purpose, that was crystal clear to the reader.
- The topics and facts in the book would support, rather than distract from, the overall theme.
- Important and difficult concepts, such as gravity or the constitutional system of checks and balances, would be presented in enough depth for students to understand them.
- Information about the lives and cultures of minorities, women, workers, ordinary people would not be stuck on gaudily, but would be integrated into the text.
- Controversy, which is so essential to both intellectual growth and democracy, would be embraced rather than avoided.
- Students would be allowed to share in the defeats, as well as the triumphs, of heroes and scientists and political leaders.
- Questions and exercises would encourage students to think, rather than to hunt down trivial details.
- Chapter summaries would not read like "cheat sheets," as they often do now. They would forge essential connections in the mind of the reader.
- The facts would be accurate.
- The prose would be clear, vigorous, and engaging.
- Good textbooks at any level would be written so that students could benefit from them independently.
- The textbook author would give students a reason for persisting through the drudgery that's inevitable in most subjects.
- And, most important, the student would be able to remember what he read.

STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Writing Rationales

An effective way to deal with controversy is to neutralize it. And one of the best ways to accomplish that is to be prepared.

For educators, that means being able to justify what they teach and why; what they select for their students to read and why.

"The teachers who have rationales in hand are able to show immediately that they have thought about what they are doing. Evidence of thought alone is sometimes enough to stop a censorship incident before it gets going," says Diane P. Shugert of Central Connecticut State College in an article published by the National Council of Teachers of English.[14]

"In addition," she adds, "preparing a written rationale really does help us to think more clearly about the books we use and to resist more strongly any attempts to remove the books from the curriculum."[15]

According to various educators, a rationale should answer these questions:

- Briefly, what is the book about?
- Is the book pertinent to the objectives of the course? How will I use the book to meet those objectives?
- Is the book appropriate for the specific class, taking into consideration the students' interests, abilities, maturity, and sensitivity?
- What problems of style, theme, tone, and language does the book present, and how will I handle these and other potential problems?
- Assuming that the objectives are met, how would students be different after reading the book? Will the book help students become critical readers and thinkers?
- Who has recommended the book? What have critics said? What reviews are available?
- What other books would be appropriate in this unit for an individual student to read instead of this book?

According to Kenneth L. Donelson of Arizona State University, "each English department should develop its own statement of rationales for teaching literature." That statement, he writes in an article, should present a number of convincing reasons in support of literary study. Among them:[16]

- Literature allows young people to see themselves and their problems perhaps a little more objectively.
- Literature provides vicarious experiences beyond the possibilities of any one person's life.
- Literature frees students to meet other peoples in other places and other times, to see similarities and differences between people, and to meet a multitude of human moral and physical dilemmas.
- Literature exposes young people to value systems and ideas and practices different from their own, which can lead to an assessment of both the student's values and those of other people.
- Literature allows students to discover the world as it was and as it is, a world neither all good nor all evil, but a world all human.
- Above all, literature provides deep enjoyment and satisfaction.

In preparing to meet the challenger, Donelson recommends that educators should also:[17]

- Establish a committee that will recommend books for possible use by the department.
- Work hard to win community support for academic freedom and to win that support before censorship strikes.
- Communicate to the public what is going on in English classrooms and why it is going on.
- Establish and implement a formal policy to handle attempted censorship.
- Prepare rationales for any book to be taught in any class.

Section Four: Textbooks

NOTES

1. Connie Muther, "Textbook deals: Is your board putting cost before curriculum?" *The American School Board Journal* (January 1986), p. 33.
2. Ibid.
3. American Association of University Professors, Commission on Academic Freedom and Pre-College Education, *Liberty and Learning in the Schools* (1986), pp. 9-10.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 6.
9. "Textbook deals," p. 32.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
13. Dan Fleming, "Whose Truth? Bias in Textbooks," *Virginia English Bulletin: Censorship or Selection?* (Virginia Association of Teachers of English, Spring 1986), pp. 90-91.
14. Diane P. Shugert, "How to Write a Rationale in Defense of a Book," *Dealing with Censorship*, ed. James E. Davis (National Council of Teachers of English, 1979), p. 187.
15. Ibid.
16. Kenneth L. Donelson, "Censorship in the 1970s: Ways to Handle It When It Comes (And It Will)," *Dealing with Censorship*, (NCTE, 1979) pp. 163, 164, 165.
17. Ibid., pp. 164-165.

Section Five: TOWARD A SOLUTION

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Tell City, a southern Indiana town, weathered a storm of censorship controversy in the winter of the 1981-82 school year.

The three-month protest began innocently enough. A ninth-grade student took home a copy of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, pointed out a few passages to his mother and said he didn't want to study the book as required in his English class.

His teacher agreed to allow him to read an alternate book, Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*. Meanwhile, the school board, realizing that a four-year-old policy for handling complaints about reading materials had never been formally adopted, quickly moved to do so. And the mother discussed the matter with her minister.

Then came the thunder.

Of Mice and Men and other novels that contained "profanity and suggestive remarks" were denounced as "evil."

The school board was accused of being "anti-God."

Educators were accused of "preaching the religion of secular humanism."

The school system was condemned for allowing students to play *Dungeons and Dragons*, a board game that the challengers said was in violation of the Supreme Court ruling against school prayer because it encouraged students to "pray to gods" to receive "magical power."

In February, Mel Gabler, the nationally known textbook critic from Texas, brought his crusade to Tell City. In support of his belief that textbooks lead children astray, he cited several passages from several books—although only one of those was being used in Tell City. Gabler also denounced school officials for forcing students to study sex education and for engineering a decline in test scores by teaching "frills, not skills." In fact, sex education was not a required course in Tell City, and test scores were on the rise.

Edward B. Jenkinson, an education professor at Indiana University and a senior fellow with Phi Delta Kappa, recounted these and other events in the Tell City saga.[1] In doing so, he notes how a single challenge can quickly escalate into an all-out war on the public school system; how a one-book protest can soon encompass other books, courses, or materials; how words, sentences, and ideas can be taken out of context by those who most often have not read the very books they are protesting; how facts can be distorted or misrepresented, but nevertheless taken as truth; how established procedures can be overlooked by those who prefer to try their case in the media; and how outsiders can use their national crusade to "clean up" public schools to fuel a raging controversy that ignites in one community over a single book, a single course, or a specific teaching strategy.[2]

In the case of Tell City, the educational community stood its ground. Jenkinson notes that at a school board meeting in March, board president Anthony Pappano denounced the protesters' use of "questionable tactics." He said the school board would no longer "permit its meetings to be used as a forum by self-righteous groups to promote their personal beliefs" and that there would be "no further discussion by the board on the topic of censorship until all interested parties have followed the established procedures of this school corporation." And then he threatened legal action, if necessary, to defend the constitutional rights of those associated with the school system—including students.[3]

No more rallies were scheduled.

A minister instrumental in the censorship drive left town.

The three-month protest was over.

Pappano's statement was the final chapter in the Tell City controversy, and, as Jenkinson notes, "that's as close to 'happily every after' as any censorship saga is likely to get."[4]

The epilogue: The tale of Tell City includes a series of lessons that school officials can learn in order to guard against a potentially explosive situation. Jenkinson, who has outlined them in his writings, believes—as do others who have studied or who have been involved in school censorship—that key among the lessons is the need for sound policies and procedures.

In a nutshell, school officials should draft policies, adopt them, publicize them, follow them, defend them, review them, and, if necessary, modify them to meet the changing needs and concerns of the school system and its community.

"As a general counsel, I daresay that's probably, for me, one of the most difficult things to do when I get a call from a school system, find out they have a problem, and they don't have a policy," August W. Steinhilber, NSBA general counsel, said at the forum on censorship. "They operate basically out of the bottom left-hand drawer of the superintendent, who keeps memos of what may or may not have occurred at board meetings three years ago. Then the cry is:

'Help! What can we do?' when there are 200 screaming individuals coming into the board meeting, or litigation has been threatened or has already begun."

"When you don't have that board policy in operation," Steinhilber continues, "it gets very difficult for us in the legal profession to defend you. How can we say you are not acting arbitrarily or capriciously?"

In its 1980 survey on censorship, the American Library Association and others found a "striking and consistent" pattern of findings in the relationship between "formal written policies and procedures for selecting instructional and library materials and for reconsidering challenged materials" and the resolution of censorship protests.[5]

The survey found that "while schools with policies and procedures apparently do not manage to escape challenges to materials, and may even experience more challenges than schools without policies and procedures, they do appear to resolve challenges more equitably, with less sacrifice to the breadth of materials available to students."[6]

But establishing policies based on sound educational objectives is not the only step school board officials can take toward managing controversy.

As noted in a citizen's guide published by People For the American Way, a liberal-interest group, there are *two* "universal conclusions" in the area of dealing with, and preventing, censorship. As noted in the guidebook:[7]

- "Protecting the freedom to learn is much easier if a school system has adopted formal selection policies to set academic standards and spell out goals, and reconsideration procedures to resolve disputes in an orderly, democratic manner."
- "It is essential to organize the broadest possible base of support for academic freedom and against censorship."

The latter means that school officials need to maintain an ongoing public relations effort, and not one that is crisis-activated. It also means that, in some cases, educators need to meet one-on-one with parents and community members who have a concern; that school officials need to team up with individuals and groups that can offer insight and perspectives on the issue at hand; and that the silent majority—or a group of silent minorities—need to be awakened, approached, and asked to comment on the complaints being raised by the more vocal segment of the community. A populace is best represented when its many subgroups are heard and considered—and not drowned out by one individual or one group seeking change.

Toward that end, school officials need to adopt a variety of strategies. Maintaining a first line of defense, however, is not to say that the challenge is always ill-guided or that the challenger is always wrong. But it likewise does not mean that the person or group voicing a complaint should automatically be appeased so that controversy can be quickly swept under the rug.

The challenge, then, as noted in the beginning of this report, is to meet controversy head on with adequate policies and procedures that ensure an open forum for deciding what should—and should not—take place in public schools. (See Appendix F for sample policies and guidelines.)

Read the remaining digests of information, review those that have come before, and assess your district's ability to prepare for and handle controversy. If you fall short, use the information, supplement it with your own thoughts and research, and tailor a workable plan for meeting the censor in your community—whether that censor strikes from within or from without.

"What we must do now is come out of our closets, to come out from hiding, to renegotiate our social contract with the community. Our heightened credibility lies in personal diplomacy. In rapidly increasing numbers we must join and take an active part in community groups; invite parents to sit in on book selection committees; organize speaker bureaus for community and civic groups . . . establish stronger links with public librarians; meet the press . . .; go to church . . .; write a short, clear letter to an editor. It's shuttle diplomacy, to be sure, and we're all on the bus. Let's just sort out the best stop for each of us."

Robert F. Hogan, *Dealing With Censorship*, 1979

75

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Applying Lessons Learned

In recounting the censorship tale of Tell City, Ind., Edward B. Jenkinson, a nationally recognized expert on school censorship issues, suggests tips school board members should utilize in drafting a line of defense against censorship challenges.

His suggestions have been adapted below in checklist form. Use it as a guide for assessing how your school system fares—or would fare—in its efforts to contain controversy, diffuse tensions, address concerns, and turn a potentially explosive challenge into a positive discourse on educational materials, goals, and objectives.

Tell City Lesson	In this regard does your school system:	
	Fare well	Need work
1. Every school system should have written policies for the selection of textbooks, library books, and all teaching materials	_____	_____
2. The selection policy should be well-publicized and well-understood by the community at large as well as by all members of the education community	_____	_____
3. The school system should have a written procedure for handling complaints about textbooks, instructional materials, courses, and library books	_____	_____
4. The school system should publicize a list of elective as well as nonelective courses, specifying which courses require parental permission	_____	_____
5. A written statement of the school system's curriculum, goals, and philosophy of education should be available to the community. How textbooks, library books, and other instructional materials are selected to help meet those goals should be carefully explained	_____	_____
6. Procedures that have been established for handling complaints about materials should be followed to the letter	_____	_____
7. The school board and administrators should—and have every right to—answer the charges leveled against a school corporation or its teaching materials	_____	_____
8. School boards should have a policy for verifying that names on petitions presented to the board are those of residents of the community	_____	_____
9. If a teacher or librarian is accused of teaching or disseminating "objectionable" material, that person should be fully apprised of the charge as soon as possible	_____	_____
10. Any person making a charge against the school system or against a specific book, course, teaching method, and so on should be given a fair and courteous hearing	_____	_____
11. Teachers, librarians, administrators, and school board members have every right to point out distortions or misrepresentations of material labeled "objectionable"	_____	_____
12. The school board and administration should never abandon their teachers. In a censorship incident, the board and administration have an obligation to their personnel as well as to the students and to the community that together they serve	_____	_____
13. The school board should never give up its legal rights. Citizen pressure groups have a right to express their views to the board. But nowhere is it written that their views should dictate—or take precedence over—board policy	_____	_____

-continued-

14. Teachers, librarians, administrators, and school board members must become familiar with the tactics and vocabulary of schoolbook protesters ..... _____ _____
15. The films, pamphlets, and books that are being circulated to stir up community discontent with the schools should become familiar to all involved ..... _____ _____
16. School officials, librarians, teachers, and parents should become familiar with textbook and library book "reviews" prepared by the Gablers of Texas and distributed by a number of national and local organizations, including the Eagle Forum and the Pro-Family Forum. (Gabler materials have been used to spark censorship controversies in all 50 states) ..... _____ _____
17. School officials should not permit unfounded criticism to interfere with the educational process ..... _____ _____
18. Students should not be isolated from the controversy; rather, they can learn much by discovering how controversies arise and how they are resolved ..... _____ _____
19. Administrators and school board members should note the actions of the school officials in the Tell City incident. The officials followed their procedures; they did not panic; they did not remove books willy-nilly .. _____ _____

Source: "The Tale of Tell City: An Anti-Censorship Saga" by Edward B. Jenkinson, pp. 13-15, People For the American Way, 1983. Reprinted with permission.

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Checklist for Preparedness

In its "Checklist for Survival Against Censorship," the Michigan Association for Media in Education provides a way for school board members to assess whether they are prepared to present a sound defense, if necessary, to counter an attack against a curricular material they believe to be justified.

The items below were adapted from the association's *Selection Policies: A Guide to Writing and Updating.*[9]

	YES	NO
1. Do you have a written instructional materials selection policy?	_____	_____
Has it been formally adopted by your governing agency?	_____	_____
Is it revised and updated periodically?	_____	_____
2. Does your policy include a written procedure for handling complaints?	_____	_____
3. Are instructional *and* non-instructional personnel in your system, from school board members and central administrators to custodians, aware of the contents of your materials selection policy?	_____	_____
4. Do you have open communication lines with civic, religious, educational, and political bodies in your community?	_____	_____
5. Do you encourage your district to maintain a vigorous public relations program on behalf of intellectual freedom?	_____	_____
6. Have you prepared written rationales for using specific classroom materials, especially in regard to those that students are *required* to use in order to meet educational objectives?	_____	_____
7. Are you aware of groups in your community that are advocates of intellectual freedom and that might have resources they would enlist in your support?	_____	_____
8. Are you aware of state and national organizations that are advocates of intellectual freedom?	_____	_____

POLICY NOTEBOOK

Get Complaints in Writing

When a challenge arises, school officials should keep two rules in mind.

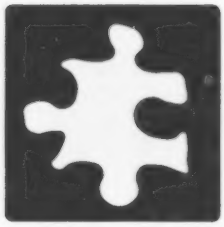
Rule No. 1: Meet with the complainant.

Rule No. 2: Get the complaint in writing.

According to a 1981 report on school censorship, once a challenge arises, "appropriate personnel should meet with the complainant to hear the specific objections being raised and to explain how and why the challenged material was selected. If, at the end of this informal discussion, the complainant still wishes to challenge the material in question, the request-for-review form should be provided."[10]

According to various groups and educators concerned with school censorship, the form should ask the complainant to respond to the following:

- Are you filing a complaint on behalf of an organization or a group of individuals?
- What is the title of the work you have a complaint about? Is it a book, periodical, or other form of instructional material?
- To what portion of the work do you object? Please be specific: cite pages, frames in a filmstrip, film sequence, band number on a record, diskette number, etc.
- Did you read or view the work in question? Which parts?
- What do you believe is the theme of the work?
- What do you feel might be the result of students' becoming involved with this material in a learning situation?
- Are you aware of how this work has been judged by critics, literary or otherwise?
- What would you like your library/school to do with this work?
  - ___ Do not assign/lend it to my child.
  - ___ Reconsider its use in the classroom/library.
  - ___ Other. (Please explain).
- In its place, what other print or nonprint material would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated and be of equal value to the instructional program?



"To fight the censor with any hope of success, we must prepare carefully before censorship strikes, not in the panic of battle. If we do not prepare in advance, or if we do not care enough to prepare, we will lose, and we will wind up losing everything, our books and our students and our freedom. And we will be forced to tell lies to the young. Perhaps they won't believe those lies, but the prospect that they might is a frightening possibility that ought to be reason enough for any English teacher to prepare to face the censor when he comes . . . and he will."

Kenneth L. Donelson, *Dealing With Censorship*, 1979

STRATEGY NOTEBOOK

Literature Classes for Parents

Fort Frye High School in Beverly, Ohio, found itself in a potential censorship situation: Parents were complaining about those "bad books" their children were reading.

That's when the English teachers decided to turn the something negative into something positive.

The result: "Books Our Children Read," a community education course that turned "suspicious citizens" into "good neighbors."

"Those 'awful books' don't seem so bad after all when parents finally give them a reading in the friendly atmosphere of a community education class," says Fort Frye educator June Berkley in recounting details of the program in an article published by the National Council of Teachers of English.[11]

For Fort Frye, the seeds of discontent were sown when Scott Foresman's *Perspectives* was challenged in nearby Charleston, W. Va. Signs of the "censorship mentality" soon appeared in Beverly. Through the local media, residents learned of attempts in other communities to rid classroom of "dirty books." That phrase, Berkley says, "provoked the inevitable."[12]

"In our case the rumors circulated around Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* . . . Friendly parents warned us; telephones were hot with the news that 'there was a dirty book in junior high English," Berkley says. A study ensued and the books were recalled. The superintendent asked a teacher to mark the "offensive" passages for his review but "wisely," Berkley says, "the teacher sent the book unmarked, with the recommendation that a book should be read in its entirety if one is to judge passages fairly and in context."[13]

Fort Frye teachers knew it was time to "reestablish confidence in their service to the community."[14]

"We felt, as many do, that discontent with printed materials does not always come directly from the book itself; but rather, that it reflects some other dissatisfaction with the school—or the teacher, or the system in general. The book becomes only the focal point, or something to seize upon," Berkley says. "Obviously, the only antidote for the situation is something to counteract this narrowing focus of unspoken disaffection."[15]

And so began "Books Our Children Read."

According to Berkley, there was no budget, so each teacher offered to teach one of the books used in the curriculum. Parents were invited to request titles. The course was advertised in newspapers, the school newsletter, and in community publications; typed notes were sent home with each student in junior and senior high school. "Although not all the 'right' people came the first night," Berkley says, ". . . We had a nucleus of people who were representative of a cross-section of the community."[16]

Each week, course participants would read a book and then discuss their reactions with the teachers, who would give their reasons for selecting the book. "Not once did we lecture on our philosophical platform or pass out sheets of rationale," Berkley says. ". . . There was often no need to explain or account for what, taken out of context, might have given rise to criticism."[17]

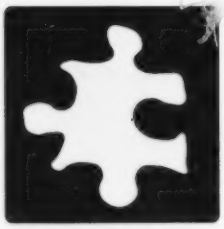
The teachers would also exhibit briefly "lessons on writing, usage, mechanics, vocabulary—the basics—incorporated into the study of each book," Berkley says. "We did not convince everyone that everything we did was right or sufficient; we shared our awareness that we have no final answers. Critics of the elective system saw for the first time how it is possible to integrate the language arts. Every session ended on an optimistic note."[18]

Offered a second time, the course was even more popular. And more than books were discussed. There was an opportunity to view videotapes, filmstrips, bulletin boards, and student writing and artwork generated by the books. Also viewed were curriculum guides written by teachers for elective courses. The parents took a tour of the "book room," a "converted classroom filled with files of student work, curriculum materials for teachers to share, and shelves of paperbacks and anthologies—an accumulation over the years that gave mute testimony to devoted effort on behalf of the community's children."[19]

As a result of "Books Our Children Read," Berkley says, "there is support now—where once there was mistrust—for teaching high school students books that encourage a broad, realistic view of this world and its possibilities and that affirm for the students a sense of themselves as reasoning and reasonable people."[20]

Section Five: Toward a Solution

NOTES



1. Edward B. Jenkinson, *The Tale of Tell City: An Anti-Censorship Saga* (People For the American Way, 1983).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. Ibid., p. 12.
5. Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, *Limiting What Students Shall Read* (July 31, 1981), p. 16.
6. Ibid.
7. Barbara Parker and Stefanie Weiss, *Protecting the Freedom to Learn* (People For the American Way, 1983), p. 33.
8. Adapted from two of Jenkinson's writings: *The Tale of Tell City*, pp. 13-15, and *The Schoolbook Protest Movement*, (Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1986), p. 92.
9. As reprinted in: *Professional Improvement Packet: Censorship* (Indiana State Teachers Association), p. 23.
10. *Limiting What Students Shall Read*, p. 28.
11. June Berkley, "Teach the Parents Well: An Anti-Censorship Experiment in Adult Education," *Dealing with Censorship*, ed. James E. Davis (National Council of Teachers of English, 1979), p. 180.
12. Ibid., p. 182.
13. Ibid., pp. 182-183.
14. Ibid., p. 184.
15. Ibid., pp. 183-184.
16. Ibid., p. 184.
17. Ibid., p. 185
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 180.

"No other problem is more perplexing for the scholar engaged in writing a textbook than that of trying to describe or present a complex and many-sided topic in a simplistic and condensed form. Pity for example the expert on American foreign policy who has to cover the Vietnam War in a few paragraphs or the scholar on the Middle East trying to cover the history, geography, economy, and culture of the region in a few pages. As a result of such condensation, the end product is usually barren of both detail and color."

Dan Fleming, *Virginia English Bulletin*, Spring 1986

Section Six: APPENDICES

Appendix A: COMMON TARGETS OF CENSORSHIP

What are the targets of the schoolbook protesters?

During the last 12 years, I have examined thousands of pages of criticism of schoolbooks, various teaching materials, and teaching methods; and I have concluded that there are at least 200 targets of the protesters who belong to organizations. The groups do not necessarily agree on all targets, but there is a common core of at least 50 that are shared by the New Right alone.

The 60 targets that follow are among the most common found in the literature of protesting groups from either the right or the left:

1. Secular humanism. Many of the protesting organizations have identified "objectionable" materials that they maintain promote the tenets of the religion of secular humanism. Attempting to remove secular humanism from the public schools has become the number one goal of such organizations. They seem to believe that if they could convince the schools and the courts to prohibit the spreading of humanism, which they intentionally confuse with secular humanism, they could eliminate such "evils" as sex education, drug education, values clarification, evolution, and the "look-say" method of reading, among others (see questions 25 to 29 for more information on secular humanism).

2. Sex education. Norma and Mel Gabler and other schoolbook protesters call sex education "how-to courses" that are responsible for teenage pregnancies and the spreading of social diseases. The protesters maintain that a majority of parents are opposed to sex education courses in the schools despite the fact that public opinion polls show that at least 70% of Americans polled endorse such courses.

3. Drug education. The founder of a protest organization in Minnesota claims that drug education was never designed as a preventative; instead, it teaches students how to "use drugs in a responsible manner" and intensifies their desire to experiment with drugs.

4. Values clarification. The Gablers and others maintain that such courses are designed to challenge and to destroy home-taught values. The protesters maintain that values clarification courses rely on situation ethics, which, they believe, is the hallmark of secular humanism.

5. Soviet propaganda. In a speech on the Capitol steps in Washington, D.C., in which he launched a new phase of his Clean Up America campaign, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, declared that most public school textbooks are nothing more than "Soviet propaganda." He said, "Our children are being trained to deny their 200-year heritage." He then urged his followers to "rise up in arms to throw out every textbook [that seeks to deny children that heritage]."

6. Citizenship. According to Parents of Minnesota, a protesting organization, a parent should not be misled "when your child is having a course on citizenship. These are not citizenship classes as we know them to be. The new courses are designed to transfer loyalties of the child from CAPITALISM (Free Enterprise) to SOCIALISM. Socialism (according to Marxist theory) is a stage of society in transition between CAPITALISM and COMMUNISM."

7. Evolution. Members of some fundamentalist religions oppose any mention of evolution—in science and social studies textbooks as well as in novels and short stories—without an equal mention of creationism.

8. Novels, stories, poems, or plays that portray conflicts between children and their parents or between children and persons in authority. Also, literary works in which children question the decisions or wisdom of their elders.

9. Literary works that contain profanity or any "questionable" language.

10. Literary works that contain characters who do not speak standard English. Such characters, it is alleged, are designed by the authors to teach students "bad English."

11. Black literature and black dialect.

12. Literary works and textbooks that portray women in nontraditional roles (anything other than housewife and mother). On the other hand, some feminist groups object to illustrations in basal readers and other textbooks that show women in the so-called traditional roles.

13. Mythology—particularly if the myths include stories of creation.

14. Stories about any pagan cultures and lifestyles.

15. Stories about the supernatural, the occult, magic, witchcraft, Halloween, etc.

16. Ethnic studies. (One protesting organization calls ethnic studies "un-American.")

17. Violence.

18. Passages that describe sexual acts explicitly, or passages that refer to the sex act.

19. Invasions of privacy. Any questions, theme assignments, or homework that ask students to examine their personal backgrounds—family, education, religion, childhood experiences, etc. In addition, any questionnaires or assignments that allegedly violate the privacy of the family.

20. An abundance of pictures, cartoons, drawings, and songs in basal readers or in any textbooks.

21. Literature written by homosexuals; literature written about homosexuals; any "favorable" treatment of homosexuals.

22. Books and stories that do not champion the work ethic.

23. Books and stories that do not promote patriotism.

24. Negative statements about parents, about persons in authority, about the United States, about American traditions.

25. Science fiction. One protester refers to all science fiction as the "Godless books."

26. Works of "questionable writers" such as Langston Hughes, Dick Gregory, Richard Wright, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Joan Baez, and Ogden Nash.

27. "Trash." Examples: *The Catcher in the Rye, Go Ask Alice, Flowers for Algernon, Black Boy, Native Son, Manchild in the Promised Land, The Learning Tree, Black Like Me, Daddy Was a Numbers Runner,* and *Soul on Ice.*

28. Any books or stories that do not portray the family unit (nondivorced mother and father with several children) as the basis of American life.

29. Assignments that lead the students to self-awareness and self-understanding.

30. Critical thinking skills.

31. Books and stories that contain words that disparage any individual or group—even if the language is a vital part of the dialogue that helps delineate a particular character.

32. Death education. In *Change Agents in the Schools,* Barbara M. Morris alleges that death education courses remove the fear of dying and make it easier for students to accept suicide, abortion, and euthanasia. She notes that in such courses students are taught that the "ultimate, the very ultimate use of the human body is a food for other humans." She notes several selections that students allegedly read in death education courses and adds: "Students also read Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* which extolls the delights of dining on well fed babies."

33. World geography, if there is mention of "one worldism."

34. Histories that mention the United Nations.

35. Histories that point out any weaknesses in the founders of this nation or in any of the nation's leaders.

36. Uncaptioned pictures in history textbooks or in any textbooks.

37. Revisionist histories.

38. Histories that refer to this nation as a democracy instead of as a republic.

39. Ecology. One of the Gablers' employees who helps write reviews of history textbooks objects to publishers devoting "so much space to a movement that's just picking up—and that some forces are trying to push. There are plenty of people who are opposed to the ecology movement. Actually only one side has been presented—and that's usually the pro-ecology side."

40. Pollution. One protesting group objects to any mention of polution in textbooks since the results of pollution have not been thoroughly proved and since the eradication of pollution is an "affront" to the free-enterprise system.

41. Psycho-drama and role playing.

42. Sensitivity training.

43. Behavior modification.

44. Magic circles.

45. Any psychological or psychiatric method practiced in the public schools. Any psychological principle used in teaching.

46. Assignments that ask students to make value judgments or assigned literature that prompts students to question value judgments made by others.

47. Human development and family development programs usually taught in home economics classes.

48. News magazines that publish stories about the harsh realities of life—war, crime, death, violence, and sex.

49. Magazines that contain advertisements for alcoholic beverages, birth control devices, or trips to countries like Cuba.

50. Nudity. Example: parents and school administrators have objected to the drawing of the naked boy in Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* and to reproductions of paintings accompanying myths that show half-clad gods and goddesses.

51. Near nudity. Many copies of the annual swimwear issue of *Sports Illustrated* never reach the magazine racks in school libraries.

52. "Depressing thoughts." Example: Norma and Mel Gabler objected to the inclusion, in a basal reader, of P.T. Barnum's statement, "There's a sucker born every minute," because it's a "depressing thought."

53. Distorted content. Example: one of the Gablers' volunteer reviewers objected to a story in a basal reader because she contended that the "text is trying to stress change as being the major thing in life. This is not true. Change has no reliability; it cause [sic] the personality to be shattered."

54. Books or stories with suggestive titles. Examples: *Making It with Mademoiselle* (a book on dressmaking) and *Belly Button Defense* (a book about basketball).

55. Negative thinking. The Gablers urge their reviewers to look for examples of negative thinking in textbooks. Such thinking, according to the Gablers, includes stories about alienation, statements from members of minority groups that indicate they feel people are prejudiced against them, stories that are frightening or horrifying, stories that are depressing.

56. Isms fostered. In the outline for reviewers, the Gablers encourage their volunteers to look for favorable comments about any of the isms: communism, socialism, internationalism, and so forth. In one of their volumes of objections about textbooks submitted for adoption in Texas, the Gablers objected to a favorable mention of UNICEF in a basal reader "because it is a known Communist front."

57. Sexist and racist stereotypes.

58. The generic use of masculine pronouns when the referent may be either male or female.

59. Books in which stories or illustrations have a disproportionate number of male, white, and middle-class people.

60. Any program developed with federal funds.

Source: *The Schoolbook Protest Movement: 40 Questions & Answers,* copyright © 1986 by Edward B. Jenkinson (Indiana University), Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Bloomington, IN, pp. 50–54. Reproduced with permission.

Appendix B: SAMPLE TEXTBOOK REVIEW

T-626

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BIAS
in
OUR LAND, OUR TIME: A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1865[1]
(Coronado Publishers, 1986)

Of the high school United States History texts adopted in Texas, only OUR LAND, OUR TIME

- **Blames Reagan for the entire increase in the national debt since 1981;**
- **Blames the U.S. for the Cold War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War;**
- **Stereotypes conservatives as hypocritical and anti-libertarian, and liberals as compassionate and progressive;**
- **Blames the rise of South American dictatorships on U.S. capitalism;**
- **Claims that Reaganomics discriminates against the poor;**
- **Claims that "the formation of business corporations" harmed "ordinary working people;" and**
- **Censors so many inconvenient facts.**

This high school United States History text, OUR LAND, OUR TIME...

BLAMES REAGAN FOR THE ENTIRE INCREASE IN THE NATIONAL DEBT SINCE 1981

Page 577, col. 1, par. 2 - par. 3, line 3[2]

"In 1981, because of the President's spending, the accumulated national debt reached $998 billion. In 1982, for the first time, the national debt owed by the United States rose to over $1 trillion. The critic of big government spending had borrowed and spent more money than any president before him.

"Nevertheless, Reagan continued to depict the Democrats, and not himself, as free spenders with tax revenues."

BLAMES THE U.S. FOR THE COLD WAR, THE KOREAN WAR, AND THE VIETNAM WAR

Page 548, left col., par. 3, lines 1 - 3
"You know that American opposition to the Soviet Union brought about the Cold War, and led to both the Korean and Vietnam Wars."

STEREOTYPES CONSERVATIVES AS HYPOCRITICAL AND ANTI-LIBERTARIAN, AND LIBERALS AS COMPASSIONATE AND PROGRESSIVE

Calls LIBERALS:
"charismatic" (FDR) p. 454
"compassionate" (FDR) p. 377
"immensely popular" (FDR) p. 448
"dauntless" (Eleanor) p. 450
"honest" (HST) p. 442
"good" (HST) p. 442
"confident" (HST) p. 442
"hard-hitting" (HST) p. 455
"eloquent" (FDR & JFK) p. 524
"great domestic reformer" (LBJ) p. 536

Calls CONSERVATIVES:
"reactionary" (GOP) pp. 454, 462
"shrewd" (GOP) p. 472
"undiplomatic" (Dulles) p. 477
"inflexible" (Dulles) p. 477
"ideological" (GOP right wing) p. 554
"sniping" (GOP & Reagan) pp. 454, 572
"hateful" (conservatives) p. 371

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P. O. Box 7518 • Longview, Texas 75607-7518 • Telephone (214) 753-5993

STEREOTYPES CONSERVATIVES AS HYPOCRITICAL AND ANTI-LIBERTARIAN AND LIBERALS AS COMPASSIONATE AND PROGRESSIVE (continued)

Page 454, col. 2, par. 1, lines 1 - 2 and par. 3, lines 1 - 10
"Republicans Gain Control of Congress The Republicans sensed that voters were in the mood for a change for the sake of change...

"The next step, the Republicans believed, was to capture the presidency in 1948. They were so confident of success that instead of putting their Congressional majorities to work on behalf of a positive program, they simply sniped at the Democratic program. Almost every bill the Republicans introduced was negative, aimed at knocking down the New Deal reforms. Because of this, Truman vetoed more than 80 pieces of Republican legislation, condemning them as reactionary."

COMMENT - OUR LAND, OUR TIME does not mention that this Congress was one of the most productive in U.S. history. It does not note that this was the Congress that passed (1) the Marshall Plan, (2) the Truman Doctrine, (3) the National Security Act, (4) the Presidential Succession Act, (5) the 22nd Amendment and (6) a major tax cut. In fact, it nowhere mentions the National Security Act, the Presidential Succession Act or the tax cut.

Page 526, col. 2, bottom section, lines 3 - 7
"...Southern Democrats and resurgent Republican conservatives, led by Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, opposed all expensive government programs except those that benefited their states."

Page T112, col. 2, "Text Review," #1, lines 12 - 16
"...Other New Frontier proposals were defeated or watered down by Southern Democrats and Republican conservatives who would vote for no expensive government programs except those beneficial to their states."

Page 577, col. 1, par. 6, line 5 - col. 2, line 7
"...Reagan continued to use anti-Soviet rhetoric, even going so far as to call the Soviet Union an 'evil empire,' and the American-Soviet relationship remained cool. Not until May 1984, when his campaign for re-election was underway, did he follow his predecessors' example and pay a visit to the People's Republic of China. Even then, Reagan used the occasion to criticize the Soviet Union."

Attacking some benefits of free enterprise, OUR LAND, OUR TIME...

BLAMES THE RISE OF SOUTH AMERICAN DICTATORSHIPS ON U.S. CAPITALISM

Page 343, col. 1, par. 1 - 2
"American business investments in the Western Hemisphere climbed from about $800 million in 1914 to $5.4 billion in 1929...

"The poorer Latin American countries desperately needed capital to improve the lives of their people. Unfortunately, New Era businesspeople took little interest in the masses of Latin Americans. As a result, many countries became ruled by military dictators who exploited and impoverished their own people.

"When rebellion threatened, the dictators turned to American investors for help...

"In the short run, the interests of American businesspeople were protected. In the long run, however, American policy in Latin America caused anger toward Americans among the people of Latin America."

Page T82, col. 2, "Text Review," #3, lines 11 - 18
"...protection of American investments in Latin America led to the rise of military dictators who exploited the people and who knew they could turn to the American government for help when rebellions arose...this American policy aroused anger toward the United States on the part of Latin Americans."

COMMENT: In its vendetta against some benefits of free enterprise, OUR LAND, OUR TIME censors the facts that Latin American governments were unstable and undemocratic long before U.S. investment in the region began, and that U.S. investment helped relieve poverty there by providing jobs and wages. Actually, the U.S. invested throughout Latin America, but intervened only in the Caribbean to protect the Panama Canal. When the European power equation in the Caribbean shifted in America's favor in the 1920's, the U.S. phased out Dollar Diplomacy in favor of the Good Neighbor Policy, but U.S. investment in the region continued.

(Write the Gablers for the complete 4 page review.)

Source: The Mel Gablers, Education Research Analysts, Longview, TX, reprinted with permission.

Appendix C: Sample Letter for Parents

Here is a sample letter (prepared by the Maryland Coalition of Concerned Parents on Privacy Rights In Public Schools) which parents can copy and send to the president of their local School Board (with a copy to your child's school principal) in order to protect parental and student rights under the Hatch Amendment Regulations effective November 12, 1984. This letter does NOT ask for the removal of any course or material; it merely demands that the schools obey the law and secure written parental consent before subjecting children to any of the following. Parents are NOT required to explain their reasons for denying consent.

To: School Board President _____
Dear _____ :

I am the parent of _____ who attends _____ School. Under U.S. legislation and court decisions, parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education, and pupils have certain rights which the schools may not deny. Parents have the right to assure that their children's beliefs and moral values are not undermined by the schools. Pupils have the right to have and to hold their values and moral standards without direct or indirect manipulation by the schools through curricula, textbooks, audio-visual materials, or supplementary assignments.

Accordingly, I hereby request that my child be involved in NO school activities or materials listed below unless I have first reviewed all the relevant materials and have given my written consent for their use:

- Psychological and psychiatric examinations, tests, or surveys that are designed to elicit information about attitudes, habits, traits, opinions, beliefs, or feelings of an individual or group;
- Psychological and psychiatric treatment that is designed to affect behavioral, emotional, or attitudinal characteristics of an individual or group;
- Values clarification, use of moral dilemmas, discussion of religious or moral standards, role-playing or open-ended discussions of situations involving moral issues, and survival games including life/death decision exercises;
- Death education, including abortion, euthanasia, suicide, use of violence, and discussions of death and dying;
- Curricula pertaining to alcohol and drugs;
- Instruction in nuclear war, nuclear policy, and nuclear classroom games;
- Anti-nationalistic, one-world government or globalism curricula;
- Discussion and testing on inter-personal relationships; discussions of attitudes toward parents and parenting;
- Education in human sexuality, including premarital sex, extra-marital sex, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, group sex and marriages, prostitution, incest, masturbation, bestiality, divorce, population control, and roles of males and females; sex behavior and attitudes of student and family;
- Pornography and any materials containing profanity and/or sexual explicitness;
- Guided fantasy techniques; hypnotic techniques; imagery and suggestology;
- Organic evolution, including the idea that man has developed from previous or lower types of living things;
- Discussions of witchcraft, occultism, the supernatural, and Eastern mysticism;
- Political affiliations and beliefs of student and family; personal religious beliefs and practices;
- Mental and psychological problems and self-incriminating behavior potentially embarrassing to the student or family;
- Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the child has family relationships;
- Legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- Income, including the student's role in family activities and finances;
- Non-academic personality tests; questionnaires on personal and family life and attitudes;
- Autobiography assignments; log books, diaries, and personal journals;
- Contrived incidents for self-revelation; sensitivity training, group encounter sessions, talk-ins, magic circle techniques, self-evaluation and auto-criticism; strategies designed for self-disclosure (e.g., zig-zag);
- Sociograms; sociodrama, psychodrama; blindfold walks; isolation techniques.

The purpose of this letter is to preserve my child's rights under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (the Hatch Amendment) to the General Education Provisions Act, and under its regulations as published in the *Federal Register* of Sept. 6, 1984, which became effective Nov. 12, 1984. These regulations provide a procedure for filing complaints first at the local level, and then with the U.S. Department of Education. If a voluntary remedy fails, federal funds can be withdrawn from those in violation of the law. I respectfully ask you to send me a substantive response to this letter attaching a copy of your policy statement on procedures for parental permission requirements, to notify all my child's teachers, and to keep a copy of this letter in my child's permanent file. Thank you for your cooperation.

copy to School Principal Sincerely, _____

Source: *Child Abuse in the Classroom*, edited by Phyllis Schlafly, Pere Marquette Press, Alton, IL, 1985, p. 440–441. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix D: International Reading Association's Terms Likely to Ignite Censorship Activities By Extremist Groups

academic freedom
acceptance
accountability
active listening
actualization
affective domain
agents of change
alternative behaviors
alternate economic systems
alternative lifestyles
analysis
anthropology
attitude
attitudinal behavior
awareness
behavior
behavior modification
behavioral objectives
black studies
body language
brainstorming
capping off
careers education
change agent
child-centered learning
child development
choosing freely
citizenship
clinician
communication skills
community education
computerized instruction
conditioning
conflict
confluent education
consciousness
consensus
coping
counseling, group
creative expression
creative life management
creative thinking
creative writing
criticism
culturally deprived
decision-making
deeply held beliefs
democracy
diagnostic approach
disconnectedness
discovery method
discussion groups
drug education
emotional growth
encounter groups
enlightenment
ethics
ethnic
experimental program
expression, non-verbal
facilitator
family life education
feedback mechanism
feelings
Foundations: Carnegie
Ford
Kettering
Mott
Rockefeller
free schools
gaming techniques
global community
global economy
global perspective
global resources
group concensus
group discussion
group dynamics
growth, human
growth, self
growth potential
helping relationships
human development
human dynamics
human growth
human potential
human relations
human resources
human sexuality
human themes
humanism
humanist
humanities
identity
individualized instruction
inductive method
innovative program
inquiry method
in-service training
interact
interdependence
internalization
interpersonal relations
journals
laboratory method
learning clinician
learning how to learn
listening skills
magic circle
mastery skills
measurable objective
mental health
modular scheduling
multi-cultural studies
multi-ethnic studies
NEA Peace studies
nihilism
non-directive therapy
non-traditional roles
non-verbal expression
objectives, measurable
open classroom
operant conditioning
parent effectiveness training
parenting
performance budgeting
prescriptive teaching
problem solving
programmed instruction
progressive education
psychometrist
psycho-drama
psycho-therapy
questing
racism
reality therapy
receiving
reinforcing
relevant curriculum
risk taking
role playing
scientific relativism
secular
secular humanism
self-acceptance
self-actualization
self analysis
self concept
self criticism
self image
sensory
sex education
situation ethics
social development
social growth
social interaction
social problems
socio-grams
synthesizing
Three tier curriculum
transactional analysis
trust
understanding
utopianism
values
values clarification
will of the people
witchcraft
whole child development
world government

Source: International Reading Association

Appendix E: Curriculum Guidelines for Common Beliefs and Values

Illustrative Examples of Applications of Democratic Beliefs and Values

	Central Focus	Democratic Rights, Freedoms, Responsibilities or Beliefs Addressed	Illustrations of Opportunities
KINDERGARTEN	Awareness of self in a social setting	1. Right to security 2. Right to equal opportunity 3. Respect of others' rights 4. Honesty	1. Explore how rules make a room safe for everyone. 2. Schedule every child to be a leader for a day. 3. Emphasize that when someone speaks we should all listen. 4. As teacher, reinforce honesty as exhibited by children.
GRADE 1	The individual in primary social groups	1. Impartiality 2. Freedom of worship 3. Consideration for others	1. When an altercation is reported, the teacher tries to find out exactly what happened before taking action. 2. Stress that each family decides whether or not or how to worship. 3. Make clear that everyone has a right to his/her turn.
GRADE 2	Meeting basic needs in nearby social groups	1. Respect for property 2. Respect for laws 3. Values personal integrity	1. Discuss vandalism in neighborhoods. 2. Demonstrate how laws protect the safety of people. 3. Explore the importance of keeping promises.
GRADE 3	Sharing earthspace with others	1. Pursuing individual and group goals 2. Government works for the common good	1. Explain how goods are exchanged with other places in order to meet the needs of the people. 2. Discuss how government is concerned about the unemployed and works to reduce unemployment.
GRADE 4	Human life in varied environments	1. Respect for the rights of others 2. Respect for different ways of life	1. Stress the importance of respecting the right of individuals from other cultures to have different values. 2. Help appreciate that lifestyles of people of other places are different from ours.
GRADE 5	People of the Americas	1. Freedom to worship 2. Right of privacy 3. Freedom of assembly	1. Point out that people came to the Americas because of religious persecution. 2. Explain that a home cannot be searched without a warrant except under most unusual circumstances. 3. Make clear that there are no laws prohibiting people from getting together in groups for any lawful purpose.
GRADE 6	People and cultures	1. Governments respect and protect individual freedoms 2. Right to life 3. Right to justice	1. Compare the record of various governments in protecting individual freedoms. 2. Study societies in which individual human rights are not respected. 3. Examine various types of judicial systems.

GRADE 7	A changing world of many nations	1. Freedom to participate in the political process 2. Right to equality of opportunity 3. Government guarantees civil liberties	1. Discuss the anticolonial movement in parts of the world. 2. Discuss social class systems in various parts of the world. 3. Debate the status of civil liberties in various developing nations.
GRADE 8	Building a strong and free nation	1. Right to liberty 2. Participation in the democratic process 3. Freedom of expression	1. Discuss the injustices of slavery. 2. Analyze the voting record of Americans and particularly that of young people. 3. Study the debts and compromises reached in the development of the Constitution.
GRADE 9	Systems that make a democratic society work	1. Right to equal opportunity 2. The common good 3. Compassion and sympathy	1. Study the opportunities people have to earn a living in various societies. 2. Discuss the extent that economic systems favor the common good. 3. Learn how systems demonstrate compassion and sympathy for the poor and destitute.
GRADE 10	Origins of major cultures	1. Freedom of thought 2. Societies need laws 3. Right to justice	1. Discuss the free thinking spirit of the people of Ancient Greece. 2. Discuss the early Roman legal system. 3. Discuss the justice systems in the various great civilizations of the past.
GRADE 11	The maturing of America (U.S. History)	1. Right to life 2. Right to liberty 3. Right to justice	1. Debate the issues surrounding capital punishment. 2. Debate the issue of big government *vs.* the rights of the individual. 3. Discuss the effectiveness of our judicial system in dealing with repeat offenders.
GRADE 12	Citizenship in a modern society facing issues and problems	1. The common good 2. Right to security 3. Right to justice	1. Analyze whether or not problems are solved through the rational process or on the basis of vested interests. 2. Discuss value conflicts surrounding national security. Should we rely on more guns or on more and better education? 3. Discuss why proportionately more minority than majority offenders are convicted by the courts.

Source: "In Search of Scope and Sequence (Report of the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Scope and Sequence, adopted by Board of Directors, 1983)." Reprinted from Social Education, (Vol. 48, No. 4, April 1984, pp. 249–261).

Appendix F: Sample Policies and Guidelines

Writing A Selection Policy

Every school system should have a comprehensive policy on the selection of instructional materials. It should relate to and include all materials, e.g., textbooks, library books, periodicals, films, records. The reason should be obvious: Haphazard patterns of acquisition will result in waste because some—perhaps many—materials will overlap in content, or will be unrelated to changing patterns of instruction.

A comprehensive policy on the selection of instructional materials will also enable school professionals to rationally explain the school program to the community. And, most important in a crisis, when there are complaints about social studies texts, human development materials in the media center, or fiction in the English class, the use of the "objectionable" item can easily and quickly be explained.

A good policy on the selection of instructional materials will include basic sections on objectives, responsibility, criteria, procedures for selection, reconsideration of materials, policies on controversial materials and other special areas of concern to your particular system.

Basic Components of a Selection Policy

Objectives

In developing your policy, state in succinct terms what the system is trying to accomplish in its educational program, and in somewhat more detail, the objectives of selection.

The overarching goal may be very broad, for example, the development of persons capable of responsible participation in society and open to continuing personal development. More specific goals should be established by professionals for each learning level.

The objectives for selection should reflect the specific goals of the instructional program. In the case of textbooks, the goal may vary from subject to subject. For example, in the sciences, one principal goal might be accuracy in terms of the latest scientific knowledge, and in history, balance in the presentation of conflicting points of view. In the case of instructional materials in the library media center, the goals may include meeting individual learning needs, providing background materials to supplement classroom instruction, providing a broad range of materials on controversial issues to help students develop critical analytical skills, etc.

- The first task is to get a copy of the school system's goals and objectives. The media center's goals and objectives should reflect those of the system.
- After looking at the system's statement, decide upon media center's goals and objectives and state them.

Responsibility

The policy should name by professional position those persons who will have responsibility for selection of textbooks and other instructional materials.

In most states in the U.S., the locally elected or appointed school board, by law, has broad powers and responsibilities in the selection of instructional materials. This authority should be delegated by policy to appropriate professionals for day-to-day exercise.

While selection of materials involves many people, including library/media specialists, teachers, students, supervisors, administrators, and community persons, the responsibility for coordinating and recommending the selection and purchase of instructional materials rests with the certificated library/media personnel. Responsibility for coordinating the selection and purchase of textbooks may rest with appropriate department chairpersons or with textbook evaluation committees.

- Write in the policy under Responsibility for Selection (or some such title) exactly who is responsible for selection of materials. It may be desirable to include a list like the one above of persons whom the designated "selector of materials" may wish to involve in the process.

Criteria

In terms of the subject matter covered, policy criteria will probably include relevance to objectives, excellence (artistic, literary, etc.), appropriateness to level of user, superiority in treatment of controversial issues, ability to stimulate further intellectual and social development. Consider authenticity, appropriateness, interest, content, cost and circumstances of use.

It will probably be desirable to include technical criteria in the policy, for example, clarity of sound in audio materials.

Procedures

Procedures should describe all steps from initial screening to final selection. They should also include provisions for coordination among departments and professionals working at different learning levels, etc.; for handling recommendations from faculty and students; and for the review of existing materials (for possible replacement, etc.).

Include at least a partial list of selection aids such as lists of reviewing sources, staff and student selec-

tion. It may be advisable to list sources which should not be used.

- This will be a large part of the selection policy. It is important to list the type of materials collected, why they are needed, and how to obtain them. Include here policies on reevaluation (weeding), replacing and repairing books, etc.

Special Areas

Some miscellaneous items to consider in policy are gifts, sponsored materials, expensive materials, ephemeral materials, jobbers and salesmen, locked case, special request, etc., free and inexpensive materials, professional materials, and procedure for handling lost materials.

- If there are to be fines charged, maintenance of special collections not available to all patrons (e.g., a collection of materials for teachers only), handling of special requests, these "special concerns" can be outlined in this section of the policy. Be sure to include procedures for integrating gifts and sponsored materials. Usually, it is stated that criteria for inclusion of gifts and sponsored materials are the same as for purchased materials.

Policies on Controversial Materials

Here, or in another place in the policy, a statement on intellectual freedom and why it is important to maintain should be included. It may be desirable to include the text of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution—"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances," and the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Reconsideration

Occasional objections to instructional materials will be made despite the quality of the selection process; therefore, the procedure for handling reconsideration of challenged materials in response to questions concerning their appropriateness should be stated. This procedure should establish the framework for registering a complaint that provides for a hearing with appropriate action while defending the principles of freedom of information, the student's right to access of materials, and the professional responsibility and integrity of the certificated library/media personnel. The principles of intellectual freedom are inherent in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and are expressed in the "Library Bill of Rights" adopted by the Council of the American Library Association. In the event instructional materials are questioned, the principles of intellectual freedom should be defended rather than the materials.

- List here the specific steps that will be taken when asked to reconsider materials in the collection. These steps should include:
  - —asking the complainant to fill out a written complaint form. (See attached form as an example.)
  - —assigning a review committee to examine the material in question.
  - —requesting that the committee report their findings to the school board.

The procedure for handling complaints should describe every step from the initial response to the complaint through the highest appeal.

Community and Public Relations

After long hard work on the part of many people, the selection policy is fully adopted by the governing body. Now it can be forgotten—right? No . . . it's not over yet. Like a mother's work, a librarian's or a teacher's work is never done!

Step two under the heading of essential preparations is developing good community and public relations. Like developing the selection policy, it won't be too difficult, but will require a fair amount of patient, concerted effort.

Public relations is a combination of educating the public about the program and selling it to them. As public institutions, the public pays the taxes necessary to continue the important activities taking place in schools and libraries. They have a right to know what's going on. Further, if, given half a chance, and if they feel they are a part of things, most citizens will be happy to give programs the support they need.

Don't make the mistake of forgetting the public. They are not as fully trained, and probably are not fully informed on educational issues, but many are vitally concerned about the education of their children. They will fight if ignored or shut out . . . and rightly so!

If there is regular and continuous publicizing of the programs and activities of the school system, if help is sought from people in the community, and if the people know just how important schools and school libraries are to their children (and what a good job they are doing!) there will be a receptive audience when a controversy comes—because the

people will know and realize that their children's best interests are being considered.

Good relations with the community can make all the difference in the world. Now is the time to start developing them!

Five Questions to Ask Yourself

- Does the school follow written policy statements on basic goals, principles, procedures and practices?
- Do policy statements in the school include procedures for handling complaints?
- Do all employees know, understand and implement those policy statements?
- Does the school reach into every corner of the community to involve a cross section of its people in planning, program development, and reporting?
- Are there two-way communications between the school and the community, with listening as well as talking on all sides at all times?

SAMPLE LETTER TO COMPLAINANT

Dear:

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ in our school district. The district has developed procedures for selecting materials, but realizes that not everyone will agree with every selection made.

To help you understand the selection process, we are sending copies of the district's:

1. *Instructional goals and objectives*
2. *Materials Selection Policy statement*
3. *Procedure for Handling Objections*

If you are still concerned after you review this material, please complete the Statement of Concern About Library/Media Center Resources form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. If I have not heard from you within two weeks, we will assume you no longer wish to file a formal complaint.

Sincerely,

Principal

INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATING COMMITTEE

Bear in mind the principles of the freedom to learn and to read and base your decision on these broad principles rather than on defense of individual materials. Freedom of inquiry is vital to education in a democracy.

Study thoroughly all materials referred to you and read available reviews. The general acceptance of the materials should be checked by consulting standard evaluation aids and local holdings in other schools.

Passages or parts should not be pulled out of context. The values and faults should be weighted against each other and the opinions based on the material as a whole.

Your report, presenting both majority and minority opinions, will be presented by the principal to the complainant at the conclusion of our discussion of the questioned material.

STATEMENT OF CONCERN ABOUT LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER RESOURCES

This is where you identify who in your own structure, has authorized use of this form—Director, Board of Trustees, Board of Education, etc.—and to whom to return form.

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____ Phone # _____

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

   ____ Book ____ Audiovisual Resource

   ____ Magazine ____ Content of Library Program

   ____ Newspaper ____ Other

   Title _____

   Author/Producer _____

2. What brought this title to your attention?

3. Please comment on the resource as a whole as well as being specific on those matters which concern you. (Use other side if needed.)
   Comment:

Optional:

4. What resource(s) do you suggest to provide additional information on this topic?

SOURCE: Academic Freedom Group. A coalition of National Organizations. Major developer of this material was American Library Association. Office for Intellectual Freedom, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611. Reprinted with permission.

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948.
Amended February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967, and January 23, 1980,
by the ALA Council.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM STATEMENT

An *Interpretation of the* LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The heritage of free men is ours.

In the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution, the founders of our nation proclaimed certain fundamental freedoms to be essential to our form of government. Primary among these is the freedom of expression, specifically the right to publish diverse opinions and the right to unrestricted access to those opinions. As citizens committed to the full and free use of all communications media and as professional persons responsible for making the content of those media accessible to all without prejudice, we, the undersigned, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of freedom of expression.

Through continuing judicial interpretations of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, freedom of expression has been guaranteed. Every American who aspires to the success of our experiment in democracy—who has faith in the political and social integrity of free men—must stand firm on those Constitutional guarantees of essential rights. Such Americans can be expected to fulfill the responsibilities implicit in those rights.

We, therefore, affirm these propositions:

1. **We will make available to everyone who needs or desires them the widest possible diversity of views and modes of expression, including those which are strange, unorthodox or unpopular.**

   Creative thought is, by its nature, new. New ideas are always different and, to some people, distressing and even threatening. The creator of every new idea is likely to be regarded as unconventional—occasionally heretical—until his idea is first examined, then refined, then tested in its political, social or moral applications. The characteristic ability of our governmental system to adapt to necessary change is vastly strengthened by the option of the people to choose freely from among conflicting opinions. To stifle nonconformist ideas at their inception would be to end the democratic process. Only through continuous weighing and selection from among opposing views can free individuals obtain the strength needed for intelligent, constructive decisions and actions. In short, we need to understand not only what we believe, but why we believe as we do.

2. We need not endorse every idea contained in the materials we produce and make available.

   We serve the educational process by disseminating the knowledge and wisdom required for the growth of the mind and the expansion of learning. For us to employ our own political, moral, or esthetic views as standards for determining what materials are published or circulated conflicts with the public interest. We cannot foster true education by imposing on others the structure and content of our own opinions. We must preserve and enhance the people's right to a broader range of ideas than those held by any librarian or publisher or church or government. We hold that it is wrong to limit any person to those ideas and that information another believes to be true, good, and proper.

3. We regard as irrelevant to the acceptance and distribution of any creative work the personal history or political affiliations of the author or others responsible for it or its publication.

   A work of art must be judged solely on its own merits. Creativity cannot flourish if its appraisal and acceptance by the community is influenced by the political views or private lives of the artists or the creators. A society that allows blacklists to be compiled and used to silence writers and artists cannot exist as a free society.

4. With every available legal means, we will challenge laws or governmental action restricting or prohibiting the publication of certain materials or limiting free access to such materials.

   Our society has no place for legislative efforts to coerce the taste of its members, to restrict adults to reading matter deemed suitable only for children, or to inhibit the efforts of creative persons in their attempts to achieve artistic perfection. When we prevent serious artists from dealing with truth as they see it, we stifle creative endeavor at its source. Those who direct and control the intellectual development of our children—parents, teachers, religious leaders, scientists, philosophers, statesmen—must assume the responsibility for preparing young people to cope with life as it is and to face the diversity of experience to which they will be exposed as they mature. This is an affirmative responsibility that cannot be discharged easily, certainly not with the added burden of curtailing one's access to art, literature, and opinion. Tastes differ. Taste, like morality, cannot be controlled by government, for governmental action, devised to suit the demands of one group, thereby limits the freedom of all others.

5. We oppose labeling any work of literature or art, or any persons responsible for its creation, as subversive, dangerous, or otherwise undesirable.

   Labeling attempts to predispose users of the various media of communication, and to ultimately close off a path to knowledge. Labeling rests on the assumption that persons exist who have a special wisdom, and who, therefore, can be permitted to determine what will have good and bad effects on other people. But freedom of expression rests on the premise of ideas vying in the open marketplace for acceptance, change, or rejection by individuals. Free men choose this path.

6. We, as guardians of intellectual freedom, oppose and will resist every encroachment upon that freedom by individuals or groups, private or official.

It is inevitable in the give-and-take of the democratic process that the political, moral and esthetic preferences of a person or group will conflict occasionally with those of others. A fundamental premise of our free society is that each citizen is privileged to decide those opinions to which he will adhere or which he will recommend to the members of a privately organized group or association. But no private group may usurp the law and impose its own political or moral concepts upon the general public. Freedom cannot be accorded only to selected groups for it is then transmuted into privilege and unwarranted license.

7. Both as citizens and professionals, we will strive by all legitimate means open to us to be relieved of the threat of personal, economic, and legal reprisals resulting from our support and defense of the principles of intellectual freedom.

Those who refuse to compromise their ideals in support of intellectual freedom have often suffered dismissals from employment, forced resignations, boycotts of products and establishments, and other invidious forms of punishment. We perceive the admirable, often lonely, refusal to succumb to threats of punitive action as the highest form of true professionalism: dedication to the cause of intellectual freedom and the preservation of vital human and civil liberties.

In our various capacities, we will actively resist incursions against the full exercise of our professional responsibility for creating and maintaining an intellectual environment which fosters unrestrained creative endeavor and true freedom of choice and access for all members of the community.

We state these propositions with conviction, not as easy generalizations. We advance a noble claim for the value of ideas, freely expressed, as embodied in books and other kinds of communications. We do this in our belief that a free intellectual climate fosters creative endeavors capable of enormous variety, beauty, and usefulness, and thus worthy of support and preservation. We recognize that application of these propositions may encourage the dissemination of ideas and forms of expression that will be frightening or abhorrent to some. We believe that what people read, view, and hear is a critically important issue. We recognize, too, that ideas can be dangerous. It may be, however, that they are effectually dangerous only when opposing ideas are suppressed. Freedom, in its many facets, is a precarious course. We espouse it heartily.

Adopted by the ALA Council,
June 25, 1971

Endorsed by the FREEDOM TO READ FOUNDATION,
Board of Trustees
June 18, 1971

SLATE Support for the Learning and Teaching of English

COMBATTING CENSORSHIP OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The Issues

Censorship of instructional materials is pervasive nationally and increasing sharply. A recent study sponsored by the Association of American Publishers, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the American Library Association revealed that more than 20 percent of the nation's school districts and 30 percent of our school libraries have been involved in challenges of materials and that these challenges have influenced the selection of instructional materials. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, ten professional associations, including the National Council of Teachers of English, have formed a coalition, the Academic Freedom Group, to develop "a detailed and specific action program."

All members of the coalition clearly recognize that censorship challenges have not been isolated skirmishes. Evidence suggests that they are most often a significant part of the political and economic battle plan of well-organized, nationally powerful affiliations such as the conservative "New Right" activists and fundamentalist religious groups.

Issues are complex, but they include concerns such as:

- What role do students, parents, and educators play in the development of educational programs and in the selection and use of instructional materials?
- Do students have a right to learn about a subject, "a right to know"?
- What academic and professional rights do teachers have regarding materials selection and teaching techniques for classroom group use? For individual student use?
- Do parents have a right to forbid that their children be exposed to specific cultural, moral, religious, ethnic, scientific, or political views and materials?
- For what in education may public tax money be legitimately used?
- What rights are guaranteed by the First Amendment that impact upon learning and teaching in the public schools?

Professional Viewpoints: NCTE

The National Council of Teachers of English and its state affiliates have as one of their major concerns matters related to censorship and the teaching of the English language arts. The Council is, for example, a member of the National Coalition Against Censorship; it encourages efforts of its standing committee, the Committee Against Censorship; it publishes many useful works, such as those listed in the bibliography, that are designed to aid members to cope successfully with censorship problems; and it has passed resolutions opposing censorship at its 1967, 1974, and 1981 meetings. The 1981 resolution reads in part: "RESOLVED, that in the face of increasing censorship the members of the National Council of Teachers of English reaffirm the student's right of access to a wide range of books and other learning materials under the guidance of qualified teachers and librarians; and that all English teachers be urged to resist censorship by employing points of view and approaches recommended in *The Students' Right to Read* and other NCTE publications on censorship."

Strategies for Action

1. Develop and promote, on a regular basis, good public relations and communication with community groups and parents about the school's philosophy and goals, the English-language arts educational objectives, the curricula and classroom and library-media programs.
2. Distribute this material and the NCTE booklet, *The Students' Right to Read*, to all faculty, school board members, administrators, community and parent groups.
3. Prepare, and have formally adopted by the school board, a written selection policy for all media, print and audio-visual. Include a well-defined procedure for handling challenged materials. Coverage should include:
   a. Philosophy and goals of the school system
   b. Goals and objectives of the instructional program
   c. Responsibility for selection of instructional materials
   d. Criteria for selection of instructional materials
   e. Standard, professional and current selection tools to be consulted (e.g., *Elementary School Library Collection*, W.H. Wilson Company Catalog Series, *Book Finder*, and NCTE booklists)

(cont.)

Share These Materials

SLATE Newsletters are offered as resources for dealing with current issues affecting the teaching of English language arts. Reproduce these materials and use them to help promote better understanding of the goals of English teaching.

NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

97

f. Procedures for reconsideration of instructional materials
   (1) Statement of policy
   (2) Guiding principles
   (3) Specific procedures
      (a) Informal resolution
      (b) Formal resolution
   (4) Forms would include:
      (a) Instructional objectives rationale form
      (b) Reconsideration of instructional materials form
      (c) Reconsideration of non-fiction instructional materials form
      (d) Reconsideration of fiction instructional materials form
   (5) Appendix would include documents such as:

   The Students' Right to Read. National Council of Teachers of English. Urbana, IL. 1982.

   School Library Bill of Rights for School Library Media Programs. American Association of School Libraries of American Library Association, 1980.

   American Library Council. *Sexism, Racism, and Other Isms in Library Materials.* American Library Association, 1973.

   Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Executive Council. *Statement on Censorship.* ASCD, 1982.

   National Coalition Against Censorship. "Statement of Concern." NCAC, 1982.

4. Follow the procedure for handling challenged materials without deviation.
   a. Attempt to resolve the challenge informally, but if at the end of the meeting, the complainant still wishes to challenge the material, a form for reconsideration should be provided.
   b. Only when the written request for reconsideration has been filed should the formal review process commence as outlined in the selection policy.
   c. Adhere to the policy established for reconsideration of instructional materials. There should be no restrictions or curtailment of use of the questioned material while it is being reconsidered.
   d. Follow the time line established in the policy. Complete the process with the written report.
   e. Consult your NCTE state president, local English supervisor, and English language arts state department consultant for further assistance and advice.
5. Acquaint the faculty, administrators, and parents with all aspects of the selection policy and the challenged materials procedure through in-service programs and workshops yearly so there is no question of what is involved or what is to be done.
6. Keep on file a written faculty rationale, an explanation of the controlling principle, for any materials students read or study in common or that are most-often censored.
7. Permit students to have an alternate assignment or allow students choices when developing course assignments and objectives.
8. Provide a variety of books and materials addressed to different levels of readability, maturation, and interest.
9. Honor a parent's right to exempt his or her child from content or assignments to which he or she objects.
10. Use standard and current professional bibliographies when selecting materials to support the instructional program.
11. Include a clause in the bargaining contract protecting academic freedom. Work for Board adoption of grievance procedures to protect teachers' due process rights.
12. Consult current references on censorship available from NCTE, ALA, and other professional organizations such as those cited in the bibliography below.

Censorship in your school system may well be prevented if you follow the foregoing guidelines and those in the NCTE *Students' Right to Read.*

Geneva T. Van Horne
(For the SLATE Steering Committee)

Resources

American Library Association. Office of Intellectual Freedom. 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

National Coalition Against Censorship. 132 West 43rd Street, New York, New York 10036.

National Council of Teachers of English. 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Publications

Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Limiting What Students Read: Books and Other Learning Materials in Our Public Schools: How They Are Selected and How They Are Removed.* New York, New York: AAP, 1981.

Burress, Lee, and Edward Jenkinson. *The Students' Right to Know.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Davis, James E., ed. *Dealing With Censorship.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Jenkinson, Edward B. *Censors in the Classroom: The Mind Benders.* Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979.

Minnesota Coalition Against Censorship. *Essential Elements of Instructional Resource Selection Policies and Reconsideration Procedures.* Minneapolis, Minnesota: MCAC, 1980.

National Council of Teachers of English. "Statement of Censorship and Professional Guidelines." Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

National Education Association, Teacher Rights Division. *Helping Teachers Teach All the Children: Workshop Resource Book.* Washington, D.C.: NEA, 1981.

O'Neil, Robert M. *Classrooms in the Crossfire: The Rights and Interests of Students, Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Librarians and the Community.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1981.

The Students' Right to Read. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1982.

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Guidelines for the Development of Instructional Materials Selection Policies.* Olympia, Washington: Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1981.

Entire issues devoted to the topic in selected journals: *Indiana English.* Fall, 1977; *Missouri English Bulletin 38.* May, 1980; *New Jersey Libraries.* Summer, 1982; *Ohio Media Spectrum.* Summer, 1982; *Social Education.* April, 1982; *Wisconsin English Journal.* April, 1980; *Wisconsin Library Bulletin.* Spring, 1981.

Section Seven: RESOURCES

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

GENERAL

American Association of School Administrators
Contact: Gary Marx, Arlington, VA, (703) 528-0700

American Civil Liberties Union
Contact: Alan Reitman, NY, (212) 944-9800

American Federation of Teachers
Contact: Marilyn Rauth, DC
(202) 879-4400

American Library Association Office of Intellectual Freedom, Contact: Judith Krug, Chicago, IL
(312) 944-6780 (See also: Freedom to Read Foundation, which has the same telephone number)

American Society of Journalists and Authors
Contact: Evelyn Kaye, NYC

Association of American Publishers, Inc.
Freedom to Read Committee
Contact: Richard P. Kleeman, consultant
2005 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036, (202) 232-3335

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
(703) 549-9110

Constitutional Rights Foundation
Contact: Todd Clark, West LA, Calif.

Educational Products Information Exchange
(Note: Located in Long Island, N.Y., Suffolk County. Provides materials for curriculum, textbook reviews.)

Freedom to Read Foundation
Chicago, Illinois, (312) 944-6780, ext. 331

INTERCHANGE
Contact: Kris Jacobs, (202) 833-4225

National Association for Public Education and Religious Liberty, (202) 833-5412

National Association of Biology Teachers
Contact: Rosalina Hariston, biologist
(703) 471-1134

National Association of Elementary School Principals
Rosslyn, VA (703) 528-6000

National Association of Secondary School Principals
Reston, VA (703) 860-0200

National Coalition Against Censorship
Contact: Leanne Katz, NYC, (212) 944-9899

National Coalition for Democracy in Education
Contact: Howard Kirschenbaum, Saratoga Springs, NY

National Committee for Citizens in Education
Contact: Carl Marburger, Columbia, MD

National Council of Jewish Women
Contact: Anne Kraus, NYC

National Council of Teachers of English
Contact: Robert "Bob" Hamm, ext. 220
(217) 328-3870

National Education Association
Contact: Roger Stephon, DC, (202) 833-4000

The National PTA, (312) 787-0977

National School Public Relations Association
Contact: John Wherry, Arlington, VA

PEN American Center: American Right to Read Project
Contact: Ellen Binder, NYC

People For the American Way, (202) 467-4999

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Contact: Diane Powers, DC, (202) 347-8500

PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER MATERIALS FROM NCTE:

Dealing with Censorship (1979), James E. Davis, editor. Order No. 10622-011

Rationales for Commonly Challenged Taught Books, Diane P. Shugert, editor, Order No. 38241-011

Celebrating Censored Books, Nicholas J. Karolides and Lee Burress, editors, Order No. 04835-011

Censorship or Selection? Patricia P. Kelly and Robert C. Small, editors, Order No. 04924-011

FROM PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY:

Values, Pluralism, and Public Education, a report on a national conference held by People For the American Way.

Attacks on the Freedom to Learn, annual reports, dating back to 1982-83, on censorship activity. Published by People For the American Way.

Textbook reviews: *A Consumer's Guide to Biology Textbooks 1985; We the People: A Review of U.S. Government and Civics Textbooks;* and *Looking at History: A Review of Major U.S. History Textbooks.*

OTHER

Censorship and Selection: Issues and Answers for Schools, by Henry Reichman. A joint publication of the American Association of School Administrators and the American Library Association.

Censorship or Selection: Choosing Books for Public Schools, a videotape and accompanying discussion guide, Media and Society Seminars, Columbia University, Graduate School of Journalism.

Religious Freedom in America: A Teacher's Guide, by Charles C. Haynes, 1986. Published by the Americans United Research Foundation.

Building Character in the Public Schools: Strategies for Success. Published in 1987 by the National School Boards Assocation as part of its *Leadership Reports.*

AIDS and the Public Schools. Published in 1986 by the NSBA as part of its *Leadership Reports.*

Reducing the Risk: A School Leader's Guide to AIDS Education. Published in 1989 by the NSBA as part of its *Leadership Reports.*

about NSBA . . .

The National School Boards Association is located in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area in colonial Alexandria, Virginia. NSBA is a not-for-profit organization whose primary mission is the general advancement of education through the unique North American tradition of local citizen control. In this way, public elementary and secondary school policy is decided by the nation's 97,000 local school board members, who are accountable to the community either directly (97% are elected) or indirectly through appointment by elected officials. NSBA promotes the betterment of the public elementary and secondary schools through services to state school boards associations and more than 15,300 local school boards; by maintaining liaison with other education organizations and governmental authorities; and by increasing school board impact on federal education laws and regulations.

Federation Members of NSBA are the 49 state school boards associations, the Hawaii State Board of Education, plus the boards of education in the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. About 2,000 local district school boards, which are members in good standing of their state associations, are NSBA Direct Affiliates.

NSBA represents the interests of school boards before Congress; provides development programs for school board members; provides school district management services; and offers to the school board movement a variety of other services, including an annual convention.

The NSBA Federal Relations Network, composed of up to three school board members in each congressional district, plays a major role in NSBA's education advocacy program in Washington, D.C.

The award-winning monthly magazine, **The American School Board Journal,** has been owned and published by NSBA since 1967. Publication of another monthly magazine, **The Executive Educator,** began in 1979, and a fortnightly newspaper, **School Board News,** began in 1981.

Seven component groups within the Federation play a significant role in National School Boards Association activities to serve Federation Members and school board needs:

- The Council of Urban Boards of Education serves the special needs of urban school boards.
- The Large District Forum focuses on the needs of major non-urban school districts.
- The Rural District Forum serves the special needs of rural school board leaders.
- The Council of School Attorneys focuses on issues of school law.
- The Federation Member Executive Directors' NSBA Liaison Committee serves as a forum for top staff administrators of the state associations and NSBA.
- The Conference of School Boards Association Communicators is composed of Federation Member and NSBA communications professionals.
- The Federal Policy Coordinators' Network focuses on administration of federally funded programs.

NSBA also maintains close liaison with other groups, including the National Caucus of Black School Board Members, National Caucus of Hispanic School Board Members, National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and Education Commission of the States (ECS), to mention but a few nationwide organizations influencing education in the U.S.

NSBA policy is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly composed of active school board members from across the country. Translating this policy into action programs is a Board of Directors consisting of 21 members and three ex-officio members. The executive director administers NSBA programs, assisted by a professional staff.

NSBA

LEADERSHIP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

National School Boards Association
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